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Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA

ARISE, AWAKE, AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED



ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYAVATI, HIMALAYAS

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Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXVI JANUARY 1971 No. 1

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by a devotee): 'Sir, why has God put us in the world?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'The world is the field of action. Through action one acquires knowledge. The guru instructs the disciple to perform certain works and refrain from others. Again, he advises the pupil to perform action without desiring the result. The impurity of the mind is destroyed through the performance of duty. It is like getting rid of a disease by means of medicine, under the instruction of a competent physician.

'Why doesn't God free us from the world? Ah, He will free us when the disease is cured. He will liberate us from the world when we are through with the enjoyment of "woman" and "gold". Once a man registers his name in the hospital, he cannot run away. The doctor will not let him go away unless his illness is completely cured.'

Question (asked by a devotee): 'If God is responsible for everything, then why should people speak of good and evil, virtue and vice? One commits sin also by the will of God, isn't that so?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'There is no doubt that virtue and vice exist in the world; but God Himself is unattached to them. There may be good and bad smells in the air, but the air is not attached to them. The very nature of God's creation is that good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness, will always exist in the world. Among the trees in the garden one finds mango and jack-fruit, and hog-plum too. Haven't you noticed that even wicked men are needed? Suppose there are rough tenants on an estate; then the landlord must send a ruffian to control them.'

Question: 'Can a man ever understand God's ways?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'I too think of God sometimes as good and sometimes as bad. He has kept us deluded by His great illusion. Sometimes He wakes us up and sometimes He keeps us unconscious. One moment

the ignorance disappears, and the next moment it covers our mind. If you throw a brickbat into a pond covered with moss, you get a glimpse of the water. But a few moments later the moss comes dancing back and covers the water.

'One is aware of pleasure and pain, birth and death, disease and grief, as long as one is identified with the body. All these belong to the body alone, and not to the Soul. After the death of the body, perhaps God carries one to a better place. It is like the birth of the child after the pain of delivery. Attaining Self-Knowledge, one looks on pleasure and pain, birth and death, as a dream.

'How little we know! Can a one-seer pot hold ten seers of milk? If ever a salt doll ventures into the ocean to measure its depth, it cannot come back and give us the information. It melts into the water and disappears.'

Question (asked by a devotee): 'Why has He deluded us? Why has He so willed?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'If but once He should give man a taste of divine joy, then man would not care to lead a worldly life. The creation would come to an end.

'The grain-dealer stores rice in huge bags in his warehouse. Near them he puts some puffed rice in a tray. This is to keep the rats away. The puffed rice tastes sweet to the rats and they nibble at it all night; they do not seek the rice itself. But just think! One seer of rice yields fourteen seers of puffed rice. How infinitely superior is the joy of God to the pleasure of "woman" and "gold"! To one who thinks of the beauty of God, the beauty of even Rambhā and Tilottamā[1] appears as but the ashes of a funeral pyre.'

Question: 'Is it possible to understand God's action and His motive?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'He creates, He preserves, and He destroys. Can we ever understand why He destroys? I say to the Divine Mother: "O Mother, I do not need to understand. Please give me love for Thy Lotus Feet." The aim of human life is to attain bhakti. As for other things, the Mother knows best. I have come to the garden to eat mangoes. What is the use of my calculating the number of trees, branches, and leaves? I only eat the mangoes; I don't need to know the number of trees and leaves.'

[1] Two celestial dancing-girls of exquisite beauty.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, THE EMBODIMENT OF GURU-POWER

EDITORIAL

I

Swami Vivekananda has been subjected to various judgements by many. You get their opinions from the columns of the daily press and the periodicals, from the pages of the books and from the pulpits, and from the theses of the researchers. They are uttered with trenchant phrases. They seize your ears and sway your thoughts. They are varied and sometimes contradictory. 'Vivekananda is the Pioneer of Indian Independence', 'Swamiji is a great Hindu Missionary', 'A Champion of the Poor', 'A Patriot', 'A Socialist', 'An Educationist' and what not. Many of these verdicts are well-documented. They are reinforced by profuse quotations from Vivekananda's *Works* or the statements of his contemporaries. You have reasons to be bewildered.

But, listen again, a little more attentively. You hear another voice, strong but not strident, in a different tone but steady. 'Let no one judge Naren (Vivekananda),' warns the voice. 'No one will ever be able to understand him fully.'[1] That voice is Sri Ramakrishna's. He ought to know better, because he brought him into this world[2] and held 'the key' to the exit.[3] While forbiding others to judge Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna himself gave a judgement of him. Others have judged Vivekananda in retrospect, while Sri Ramakrishna did so in prospect, as a prophet would do. He did not believe much in politics or patriotism, socialism or any 'ism'. Even if he did,—which is very unlikely—he knew them as absolutely trivial compared to the immortal essence in man.

II

What, then, is his judgement?

At their first meeting at Dakshineswar, the Master knelt before Vivekananda, and said with folded hands:

> 'Lord, I know you are the ancient sage Nara—the Incarnation of Narayana—born on earth to remove the miseries of mankind.'[4]

Again, in one of Vivekananda's early visits, Sri Ramakrishna said to him:

> 'Behold, in you is Shiva! And in me is Shakti! And these two are One!'[5]

At Cossipore, in reply to a desire expressed by the disciple, he said:

> '...I thought you were a vast receptacle of life, and here you wish to stay absorbed in personal joy like an ordinary man! ...; you will bring spiritual consciousness to men, and assuage the misery of the humble and the poor.'[6]

Sri Ramakrishna made many such observations, not with the aid of frail reason but through the power of unerring intuition. According to Vivekananda, this intuition was so developed in his Master that he gathered 'in ten minutes, from a man's subconscious mind, the whole of his past, and determined from that the future and his powers'.[7] Again, when Vivekananda protested at such adulation, the Master said, 'I cannot help it.... The Divine Mother showed me certain things which I simply repeated. And She never reveals to

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1 His Eastern and Western Disciples: *The Life of Swami Vivekananda,* Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, 1955, p. 57.

2 & 3 Vide: ibid. pp. 50-1 & p. 145.

4 ibid. p. 46.

5 ibid. p. 61.

6 Romain Rolland: *The Life of Ramakrishna,* Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, 1930, pp. 280-1.

7 *The Complete Works,* Vol. VIII (1955), p. 276.

me anything but the truth.'[8] As the Mother is infallible, it is safer to be guided by one who is guided by Her!

Further, Sri Ramakrishna announced his oneness with Swami Vivekananda in the Śiva-Śakti formula. If Sri Ramakrishna's mission and message are renunciation and God-realization, can his foremost disciple's mission and message be different? Paying homage to his Master, Vivekananda once declared: 'I bear the feet of that man on my head; he is my hero; that hero's life I will try to imitate.'[9] In a letter written to a brother-disciple, he exclaimed, 'I am his child, nourished by his heart's blood.'[10] Ramakrishna-Vivekananda was one soul which inhabited two bodies!

According to the testimony of the Mother-guided Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda is 'Śiva', born 'to bring spiritual consciousness to people, and 'to remove the miseries of mankind'.

III

In the Hindu tradition, the great God Śiva, in one of His aspects, is considered as the *Lokaguru*, the Teacher of the whole universe. This idea gets a wonderfully poetic expression in Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's hymn to Dakṣiṇāmūrti. In the temples of Southern India, we invariably come across images of Dakṣiṇāmūrti with His blissful face and the *cinmudrā* (teacher's pose). Swami Vivekananda was Śiva, and he became the 'Dakṣiṇāmūrti' when he went to the South (Dakṣiṇa, in Sanskrit). In fact, his career as the world-teacher became manifest from that stage onward.

What is this 'Śiva-power', the power of the guru? It is the power of dispelling the darkness of ignorance which binds a soul to the body. Vivekananda meant this power only when he said:

> 'When I stand on the platform, a Power comes over me which makes me feel as though by one word I could carry the whole audience of thousands across Maya and make them break the prison-walls of "I" and "Mine"!'[11]

His listeners and disciples vouch for this enlightening power in him. Writing about his impressions of Swamiji's lecture on 'Vedanta' in Lahore, Swami Ram Tirtha says:

> 'The listeners were so deeply engrossed, and it created such an atmosphere, that all idea of time and space was lost. At times, one acquired absolute realization of oneness between oneself and the cosmic Atman.'[12]

This is what Sister Nivedita writes about her Master:

> '... he stood in our midst as, before all, the apostle of the inner life, the prophet of the subordination of the objective to the subjective.'[13]

Records in his biography tell us how his listeners felt the spiritual awakening within them, how their doubts resolved, and how they felt all fear gone.

Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox, one of the foremost poetesses of America, used to attend Swami Vivekananda's lectures and classes. She records the impressions of her husband and herself thus:

> 'When it (the lecture) was over we went out with new courage, new hope, new strength, new faith, to meet life's vicissitudes. ... Sometimes after sleepless nights of worry and anxiety, the Man would go with me to hear the Swami lecture, and then he would come out into the winter gloom and walk down

[8] His Eastern and Western Disciples: op. cit. p. 58.

[9] *The Complete Works,* Vol. III (1955), p. 212.

[10] ibid. Vol. VI (1963), pp. 282-3.

[11] His Eastern and Western Disciples: op. cit., Vol. IV (1918), p. 150.

[12] *Prabuddha Bharata,* May 1963, p. 234.

[13] *The CompleteWorks of Sister Nivedita,* Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1967, Vol. I, pp. 29-30.

the street smiling and say, "It is all right. There is nothing to worry over." And I would go back to my own duties and pleasures with the same uplifted sense of soul and enlarged vision.'[14]

The Śiva-power rouses the spiritual consciousness, infuses hope, strength and faith, and grants an enlarged soul-vision, re-establishing our affinity with Eternity.

IV

Misery of man is an effect of ignorance. Misery is permanently removable only by getting rid of ignorance. Vivekananda by his guru-power helped men to get back their Ātman-consciousness. Misery cannot co-exist with Ātman-consciousness. More than this, Vivekananda, the saviour that he was, stood by the side of each soul. He held in a parental clasp, as it were, its trembling hands, assuring it with the words 'Don't fear'. Did not Sri Ramakrishna foretell that he would become the banyan tree under whose spreading shade millions of men and women, scorched by the misery of the world, would gather and find peace ?

We have in Madame Emma Calve, the celebrated singer, a typical example of how Swamiji removed the misery of human beings. She had met with a shattering domestic tragedy which had left her heart-broken. She had even unsuccessfully attempted suicide. She came to know of Swamiji through her friends and met him. Without even looking at her, Swamiji spoke to her about her past, her present distraught condition, and how she should become happy and cheerful again. She was greatly puzzled and asked him how he could know all her past and inmost secrets of her life. Swamiji smiled and said, 'I read in you as an open book.' She later wrote about the effect of this interview:

'I left him, deeply impressed by his words and his personality. He seemed to have emptied my brain of all its feverish complexities and placed there instead his clear and calming thoughts. I became once again vivacious and cheerful, thanks to the effect of his powerful will.'[15]

Even today, when you are scalded from within by the seething 'feverish complexities', you take up any collection of Swamiji's utterances and read a few. See how invariably the fever is assuaged and mental health restored. They give a shot in the arm, as it were, of strength and courage. To posterity his life and teaching have become the cooling shade of the banyan.

V

Vivekananda's guru-power is revealed to us, again, in his penetrative sayings. Scattered all over his *Works*, these sayings encompass every aspect of man and the universe. Especially, those which relate to religion, God, soul and spirituality are outstanding. These sparkle with an inner luminosity often seen in the Upaniṣadic *mantrams*. Surely they are sparks flashed forth from the blazing core of his realizations.

He defined religion aphoristically: 'Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man.'[16] How beautifully he restates it, with a dualistic overtone, in another context: 'Religion is the eternal relation between the eternal soul and the eternal God.' Do you want a non-metaphysical definition of religion ? Here it is: 'The pleasure of the Self is what the world calls religion.'[17]

We experience multiplicity within and without. Is this different from the impersonal Reality which is said to be homogeneous and non-dual ? Swamiji, from his

[14] His Eastern and Western Disciples: op. cit. p. 387.

[15] ibid. p. 351.

[16] *The Complete Works,* Vol. IV (1945), p. 304.

[17] ibid. Vol. VII (1947), p. 9.

jñānī's vantage-point, unifies everything at one stroke:

> 'There is really no difference between matter, mind and spirit. They are only different phases of experiencing the One. This very world is seen by the five senses as matter, by the very wicked as hell, by the good as heaven, and by the perfect as God.'[18]

Swamiji admitted the personal God, as is done by Vedānta. But the explanation he gave of this concept is original and profound: 'Some imaginations help to break the bondage of the rest. ... The highest imagination that can break all the links of the chain is that of Personal God.'[19]

To his all-comprehending vision, the existence of evil in God's creation was not anomalous. There was no need to usher in a 'satan' or 'devil' to account for evil. Good and evil are relative terms and generally depend on human selfishness. It is childish to bifurcate them. They are the obverse and reverse of the same coin of truth. Therefore, he boldly declared, 'I preach a God of virtue and a God of sin in one. Take Him if you dare—that is the one way to salvation.'[20]

As a breaker of bondage, he brought to every one the gospel of the glorious Ātman. In this he might stagger the ordinary man with the majesty of his utterance. But, all the same, he spoke out the dazzling truth without toning it down with dualistic dilution. 'Never forget', he exclaimed, 'the glory of human nature! We are the greatest God that ever was or ever will be. Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless ocean which *I am*.'[21]

He drew our attention to the human Self as the source and centre of all knowledge. He declared: 'Go into your own room and get the Upaniṣads out of your own Self. You are the greatest book that ever was or ever will be, the infinite depository of all that is.'[22]

Without the fire of dispassion, no spiritual awakening is possible. This world should be seen as hollow and vain. Swamiji gave us the correct perspective about this world: 'A little of the Infinite is projected into consciousness, and that we call our world.'[23] 'This world is nothing. It is at best a hideous caricature, a shadow of the Reality.'[24] Therefore, he warned: 'Remember! the message of India is always "*Not the soul for Nature, but Nature for the soul!*"'[25]

When Vivekananda speaks of Sādhanā or spiritual striving, we almost catch a glimpse of his own intense struggles to realize the Truth. The practical hints and instructions strewn in his *Works* would be an illuminating and rewarding study for any aspirant after the higher life. He says:

> 'This intense longing—becoming mad after realizing God or getting the knowledge of the self is real spirituality.'[26]
>
> 'Let us put forth all our energies to acquire that which never fails—our spiritual perfection.'[27]
>
> 'It is better to die seeking a God than as a dog seeking only carrion.'[28]

As an integral and indispensable part of Sādhanā, Swamiji greatly emphasized meditation. He was himself a past-master in it from birth. Sri Ramakrishna's hawk-eye had detected it almost on their first meeting. Swamiji exhorts all to meditate in these inspiring words:

'Meditation is the one thing. Meditate!

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18 ibid. Vol. V (1959), p. 272.
19 ibid. Vol. VII (1947), p. 97.
20 ibid. Vol. I (1946), p. 338.
21 ibid. Vol. VII (1947), p. 76.
22 ibid. Vol. VII (1947), p. 69.
23 ibid. Vol. I, (1946), p. 226.
24 ibid. Vol. II, (1958), p. 174.
25 ibid. Vol. VIII (1955), p. 261.
26 ibid. Vol. VI (1963), p. 457.
27 ibid. Vol. II, (1958), p. 37.
28 ibid. VII, (1947), p. 43.

> The greatest thing is meditation. It is the nearest approach to spiritual life—the mind meditating. It is the one moment in our daily life that we are not at all material—the Soul thinking of itself, free from all matter—this marvellous touch of the Soul!'[29]

VI

It is indeed very difficult to comprehend Vivekananda. He is like the sun. You may describe the sun as a bright, hot disc or in terms of corona or flares or prominences. Unless and until you describe the nuclear process occurring in its core, your description of the sun is superficial. Once that is understood all other solar phenomena stand explained. Vivekananda's patriotism or socialism, his being a Hindu missionary or social reformer, his being an educationist or a fiery nationalist—all these are external aspects of his personality. When we see him as a *Brahmajñānī*, a knower of the Supreme Truth, and a *Lokaguru*, a world-teacher, we can be sure of understanding him rightly. That is also the perspective provided by Sri Ramakrishna. Not heeding all these facts, if we persist in judging him from our fads, we will be committing a grave error.

Who but a divine teacher, whose only motive is rousing God-consciousness in men, will speak like this ?

> 'It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body—to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work. I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God.'[30]

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[29] ibid. Vol. V (1959), p. 253.

[30] ibid. Vol. V, p. 414.

शान्ता महान्तो निवसन्ति सन्तो
वसन्तवल्लोकहितं चरन्तः ।
तीर्णाः स्वयं भीम भवार्णवं जना-
नहेतुनान्यानपि तारयन्तः ॥

There are good souls, calm and magnanimous, who do good to others as does the spring, and who, having themselves crossed this dreadful ocean of birth and death, help others also to cross the same, without any motive whatsoever.

—*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 37.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Kasi
10.1.1913

Dear Sir——,

... I am finding that men are generally very selfish. They want others to do things for them—no one is ready to put forth efforts for himself. Especially in regard to spiritual life all want to attain perfection right now without having to labour for it. Consequently they hardly ever think of the trail of evil deeds done in the past which being like veils do not allow the true natuure of the self to be realised. When these veils are removed with unremitting assiduous efforts there happens the dawning of knowledge or blossoming of devotion. Why should this not be happening right now—is the unthinking demand of all.

However, this I am writing to you clearly: please do not bother me any more with such letters. May the Lord do you good. Know this for certain that what is to be said and done for you, I have done to the best of my ability. Be sure I am telling you the truth, and that nothing is being said in annoyance.

With my best wishes,

Your well-wisher,
Sri Turiyananda

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Kasi
2.1.1913

Dear Sir——,

Just received your letter dated the 29th December. Holy Mother's birth day was celebrated here with great solemnity on the 30th December last. Everyone said that never before was so much joy experienced in this Ashrama. Truly speaking on that day it was felt as if waves of joy were flowing on. Everything was performed with great efficiency and neatness.

This time in your letter you did not ask any question. You have rightly said: as long as one does not have samadhi, one's doubts are not fully set at rest. Without direct realization one cannot be truly free of doubt. Through discrimination, however, many experiences are attained. Study of scriptures with reverential faith is of great help, not to speak of holy company

With my best wishes and love.

Sri Turiyananda

WHAT'S WRONG WITH EDUCATION ?

PROFESSOR WILLIAM HOOKENS

Recently when one of my young colleagues was given a farewell a good few of his friends including myself spoke. Most of them said the goody-goody things that are usually said on such occasions. They said what a good and sincere person he was and how much he would be missed in the institution in which he was for a little more than a year.

Others tried to vary the note by saying that his going to the police department augured well for the country because the police would be a finer and cleaner department. There would be unity and integrity to bear on the services on which law and order depended. Yet others, again, thought it was such a pity that brilliant minds of the education department should leave it for posts that were not only lucrative but had status value as well. And, in almost a whisper, they said that education needed looking into if the brain drain was not going to be a usual affair.

What's so wrong with education that it has become the backwaters of life ? Why is it that education is being turned down everywhere as an expensive item that is bringing no appreciable results ? Education is, pitiably enough, not the thing it once stood for. Those who call themselves educationists subscribe to the view so different to what education represented that education has changed in both definition and content. This seems in keeping with the age of democracy where everybody is equal to another or feels so and the teachers, by and large, cannot help being democratically minded.

Today the teachers find themselves doing a job for which they are paid on an hourly basis, so to speak, and the parents or the guardians feel that they have a say in the children's education. This being so, they often challenge the teachers through the Heads of institutions on what should be the content value of education. And since the customer is always right, there is nothing to be said by way of argument or rebuttal but to accept the fact and guarantee satisfaction at all times with a smile.

When experience has become a byword and knowledge the thing, the teacher today prefers to have knowledge, such knowledge as can be culled from books or periodicals. He uses it in a way that will bring maximum results. The days have gone, probably never to return, when the experience of the teacher counted. He was wanted everywhere for what he was and stood for. He is a mere label today or number, a non-essential entity. Any teacher, after a short period of training, is supposed to do the job of teaching, and the number of teachers produced is legion, thanks to these teachers' training centres that do things so mechanically well.

Add to this the fact, the demonstrable fact, that other things are made to count in education, including the art of getting on with people. And this does not mean merely the art of getting on with them but getting on with them at all costs. This makes education different, alarmingly different from what it once was. Today education is not meant to elevate the section of children in the teacher's charge but is the art of continuance at his job of teaching through sheer necessity. The teacher sees the facts as they are and rather than want to change society, the teacher finds himself changing. He changes to the extent of ceasing to be a teacher and doing the job he was meant to do. Rather than alarm people by a different course of action, the educative influence,

he takes to the course open to him and to others, the path of least resistance, one of sheer acquiescence in people, places and things as they are, while he plays the cog in the huge grind of life.

There is, therefore, no such thing as dedication to the teaching profession. The teacher is only aware of the bread-and-butter problem and making the wherewithals of life easy. All said and done, all want the comforts of life and why make things difficult for oneself and others by love for Ideals or Values ? These, the moderns feel, have been the bane of people, and they are all for mechanization at as rapid a rate as possible. What are human beings after all and why pretend that they are noble when facts of everyday life give the lie to them ? Teachers begin to see things for themselves. It is all very well wanting a new world, but what if the world, as they see it, is unchangeable by design and intent ? Why not accept facts as they are and see the teacher's profession as no better or worse than any other ? The fact that the teaching profession is becoming a crowded one makes teachers wary of their secrets.

Love, trust, loyalty—these things have suddenly fled from the portals of education as though they were primitive things to be done away with in this age of science and diplomacy. The progress of education is in the reverse because the impacts of life, sullied life, are being carried to education. When culture is counted in terms other than values, things must go wrong with education. Where the good life is equated with pleasures of a doubtful nature, nobility is lost and black cunning rules the world. Where moderation, control and taste are lost sight of, other things gain the upper hand. The teacher, poor fellow, wants to be part of society and which better way is there then than to adhere to what society wants of him at all times ? Why should the teacher care for the wisdom of the ancients when he can get the so-called wisdom from the moderns in all walks of life ?

There are, as sound educationists will tell us, more obstacles to education than facilities. This being so, education is not only tackled erratically by those who matter but hopelessly so to the extent of making education the cemetry of human endeavours. When industry, confidence, character and humanity are not the developed virtues of the educated people, when copying at examinations, gheraoes and strikes are the only means adopted for degrees and more degrees, what can we have in the country but evil-doers ? Education is certainly not meant to be a blind alley but a noble opening to life eternal here and afterwards. But when education itself fails to deliver the goods, when the teachers themselves, for one reason or another fall short, far short of the ideal, there is bound to be frustration in all quarters. The human mind and soul being what they are cannot be hoodwinked for long by chimeras. And the chimera that education today holds as the Ideal is nothing short of a disgrace, a form of suicide. But it has become the creed of modern man the world over because he has let the things of the spirit flee for the things of sheer body and matter. We have industries and more industries but to what purpose when the men and women in these industries are nothing more than mere machines in whom the finer things of life lie unused. Money, power, time—these have a place in life and only the right education can give them the right place in life. Or they are mere nothing and life becomes a sheer futility! There can be no future for the people and the country when the teachers who are the builders of tomorrow are being neglected and others are made to replace them. No garden is grown except by gardeners. Picnicking is all very well but we need a home to come back to for a wash and rest. We are not gypsies, how-

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF NEO-VEDANTIC MOVEMENT

DR. LAXMAN PRASAD MISHRA

The scholars of Indian philosophy generally mark three stages in the development of Vedanta. First, the creative stage of Upaniṣads; second, the stage of systematization represented by Bādarāyaṇa in his work *Brahma-Sūtra*; and the third stage is that of the *ācāryas* and their predecessors, who interpreted and elaborated the Upaniṣadic ideals into various ways and wrote commentaries on the *Brahma-Sūtra* according to their views. Among them the chief systematic interpreters of Vedanta are Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka and Vallabha associated with the Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita, Bhedābheda and Śuddhādvaita schools of Vedanta respectively. There is also a fourth stage as recognized by the contemporary critics, which begins from the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and is elaborately presented through scientific and rational explanations and systematically arranged by Swami Vivekananda and other teachers such as Swami Ram Tirtha, Aurobindo, etc. The traditional Vedanta which is running uninterruptedly from the Vedic age, has become the philosophy of culture in this last phase of development through its process of reorientation and reconstruction, and has been termed the Neo-Vedantic movement. Dr S. C. Chatterjee rightly observes: 'The history of this process of reconstruction has been the history of this Neo-Vedantic movement in contemporary Indian philosophy.' [1]

[1] Dr. S. C. Chatterjee, *Prabuddha Bharata,* May 1963, p. 215.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

By the end of the nineteenth century, India under the British rule had become old and effete, broken and dispirited. This time is designated as the darkest age of the modern Indian history. On account of centuries of political subjection and prostration, economic decline, cultural decadence and social stagnation, inferiority complex and slave mentality, Indians lost all respect for their own cultural heritage and became alienated from it. People were feeling a vacuum and uncertainty in their mind. Europeans and historians of the nineteenth century regarded the Hindus as little better than barbarians or even savages. The aim of education, introduced by the British, was westernization and denationalization.[2] In the name of rationalism and progress, atheism, individuation and materialistic realism were flowing in all over the nation. In brief, Hinduism had fallen from its high spiritual and philosophical pedestal and was going day by day to stagnation and decline. Christian mission institutions and their religious teachers in India, with the help of Government and the aid from foreign agencies, in the name of service of

[2] Swami Vivekananda once remarked on the impact of English education in these words: 'The child is taken to school and the first thing he learns is that his father is a fool, the second thing that his grandfather is a lunatic, the third thing that all his teachers are hypocrites, the fourth that all the sacred books are lies!' (Swami Vivekananda: *The Complete Works,* Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, Vol. III, 1960, pp. 301-2.)

(*Continued from p.* 10)

soever much we love them and their ways. Tradition is a glorious thing, and our education needs to have this as its basis, or education becomes wasteful and even ruinous.

humanity and emancipation, were proselytizing the Hindus and severely attacking the Hindu religion, customs, culture, philosophy and social life.

It was at this time of spiritual and moral crisis, turmoil and unrest that the instinct for self-preservation burst out and mighty movements of socio-religious reform of both kinds, liberal and orthodox, progressive and retrograde, sprang up one after another from all corners of the country, to resuscitate and reconstruct the ancient heritage of India and lead her once more to evolve a glorious future. It is remarkable that the present renaissance of India was characterized primarily by religious and spiritual aspirations; and we find from Raja Ram Mohan Roy right up to Mahatma Gandhi arriving at the same conclusion that any reorientation of Indian life which attempts a break with the religious spirit cannot go very far. We find a long line of powerful workers and thinkers blessed with extraordinary creative and speculative talent and a great number of socio-religious reform movements such as the Brahmo Samaj movement of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen and others, Arya Samaj movement of Swami Dayananda, Theosophical movement of Annie Besant, Prarthana Samaj of G. V. Ranade etc. to brace up the sinking Hinduism with their many-sided activities and rationalistic works.

The most important feature we find almost in all movements is that they spun their religious and philosophical thoughts, in some way or other, around the Vedanta, though most of them failed to recognize the Vedantic spirit of synthesis and unity which is the essence of Hinduism. No doubt they all served Hinduism a lot and rejuvenated India; yet, as their approach was negative they criticized the various parts of it such as idol worship, Hindu polytheism, Varna system, child marriage and others. R. C. Zaehuer rightly observes that all these movements, 'lacked the wide tolerance in matter of belief and religious practice that has ever been characteristic of Hinduism.'[3] Really, while the main object of all these movements were to reform Hindu society, they confused the main issue and moved their activities towards the reformation of Hindu religion. It is the Christian missionary that inspired them, either by imitation as in the case of Brahmo Samaj or through opposition as in case of Arya Samaj. Thus, on the one hand they reflected themselves as one more sect, among the vast and divergent aspects of Hinduism and on the other they attacked Hinduism from inside as Christian missions did from outside. They also failed to adjust themselves according to the intellectual demands of the time. Not one of them had tried to link all the faiths in a single thread of unity and to explain the past heritage of Indian spirituality in the light of modern scientific knowledge suited to modern man.

But the Neo-Vedantic movement of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda is devoid of all such short-comings of other movements as Prof. D. S. Sarma rightly observes, '... of all the religious movements that have sprung up in India in recent times, there is none so faithful to our past and so rooted to our national consciousness and yet so universal in its outlook, and therefore none so thoroughly representative of the religious spirit of India as the movement connected with the names of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and his disciple Swami Vivekananda.'[4] Neo-Vedantic movement fulfils all the needs and can be considered a pioneer attempt in this direction. It is therefore said that, '... in a way the

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[3] R. C. Zaehuer: *Hinduism,* Oxford University Press, London, 1962, p. 212.

[4] D. S. Sarma: *Hinduism Through the Ages,* Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1967, pp. 121-22.

true starting point of the present Hindu renaissance may be said to be Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. For his life presents the entire orbit of Hinduism and not only a segment of it.'[5] Sri Ramakrishna influenced through his life and teachings not only the Hindus but also the followers of other faiths and 'entire rationalistic school of the present era'[6], without founding any new cult. He laid the basis and foundation of Neo-Vedanta, which may be characterized as the movement of '*samanvaya* and *avirodha*' (synthesis and reconciliation) and 'it was left to Vivekananda to build the superstructure of Neo-Vedanta on it.'[7] Vivekananda expounded philosophically, interpreted rationally and spread the message of Ramakrishna all over the world. Thus the Neo-Vedantic movement of Sri Ramakrishna not only introduces a new era in the evolution of philosophy and religion, but it also strengthened Hinduism so much that it raised again its head with confidence and attempted to 'conquer the world through (its) spirituality and philosophy'[8], as it did in ancient time.

The principles of Neo-Vedantism are rooted in *Prasthānatrayī*, mainly on Upaniṣads. 'Back to the Upaniṣads' was the very cry of Swami Vivekananda. Neo-Vedantic way of approach is more positive, constructive, universal, catholic and non-sectarian, unlike the other movements that are negative, destructive, condemning and abusive. While all the reform movements were engaged in curing the immediate calamity and evils of the society of their time, Neo-Vedantism catered to the future development of India. The leaders of the movements, other than the Neo-Vedantism, were either taking their inspirations and cue from the West, found fault with Indian traditions and presented an imitation of western means and methods, which was not of much avail to the whole nation; or were purely in tune with the old traditions of orthodoxy, without accepting any kind of reconciliation with the West, avoiding and neglecting the modern developments and scientific knowledge; as they seemed to agree with Rudyard Kipling that the East was East and West was West and they could never meet. Thus, no movement except that of Swami Vivekananda presents a full spiritual development on international lines and for the good of humanity at large in Vedantic way.

Swami Vivekananda and other leaders of Neo-Vedantic movement realized that as religion is the backbone, the very vital air of Indian life, the progress of India depends on the realization of the Vedantic ideals in day to day life. The history of India is the witness of the fact that at the time of its depression, subjection and degradation, whenever the renaissance came, it came through the Vedantic spirit. Buddha, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Kabīr, Nānak, Tulasīdāsa—all are the product of Vedanta. The previous reformers ignored the difference between religion, spirituality and social reform. We know that the Śruti stands for the unchangeable, eternal truths and the Smṛtis are for the varying adjustments according to the need of time and place. Religion and spirituality are concerned with the former, whereas social laws, customs and regulations with the latter. The reformers committed the mistake of mixing them together and discarded religion in the name of progress. They also ignored the fact that Vedanta is and will be, the backbone of all reform movements, spiritual as well as material and some of them like Ram Mohan and Keshab Chandra Sen believed in England's mission to India, while Neo-Ved-

[5] Ibid., p. 122.

[6] Swami Nirvedananda: *The Cultural Heritage of India,* Ramakrishna Mission Institute of culture, Calcutta, Vol. IV. p. 669.

[7] Dr S. C. Chatterjee, op. cit., p. 215.

[8] Swami Nirvedananda: op. cit. p. 673.

antin believed in India's mission to the West. Neo-Vedantic leaders aligned themselves with the long ancient line of Vedantic teachers, without founding any new cult, and claimed to be mere exponents of ancient traditions of which Śrī Śaṅkarācārya is the most shining jewel.

The teachings of Sri Ramakrishna on which the Neo-Vedantic movement is based, are not only simple, clear and practical but are also catholic, wide, universal and completely free from esotericism, in which all the possible growth and expansion are possible without any kind of contradiction or any harm to any religious sect or creed. This movement does not criticize or neglect any religion. It eschews conversion of the followers of other faiths. One of the most significant features of Neo-Vedantic movement is that it does justice to all aspects of human experience and opens the door for developments without fear with the march of modern knowledge and scientific researches. It welcomes the progress of science as it is certain that truth cannot contradict truth. It welcomes all without any distinction of caste, creed or colour. Thus the Neo-Vedantic movement not only fulfils the immediate need of the time but also has in it the capacity to fulfil the possible needs of infinite future and stands for a programme of national regeneration.

Why Is It Called Neo-Vedanta?

There is no doubt that the philosophy and religion of Neo-Vedantism is a re-establishment and re-statement, reconstruction and re-valuation, reorientation and reinterpretation of Advaita Vedanta of Śaṅkara with modern arguments, in modern language, suited to modern man, adjusting itself with all the modern challenges. But it is a new type of Vedanta as its leader interpreted and re-casted Vedanta in the modern language, having in mind the problems of modern age. Swami Vivekananda and other leaders were quite aware of the rapid growth of atheism and scientific knowledge, of the secular and materialistic life of the West where the prevailing philosophical trends were pragmatism, naturalism, empiricism, nihilism and logical positivism. It was for that reason that they presented Vedanta so rationally and scientifically with special emphasis on synthesis (*samanvaya*) and reconciliation (*avirodha*), that the philosophy of Vedanta took new dimensions and became so broad, catholic and universal that it could play the part of a future Universal Religion and World Culture. Neo-Vedantic movement tried to bridge the gulf between science, religion and philosophy, dualism, qualified non-dualism and non-dualism and emphasized that revelation is not opposed to reason, but both are complementary to each other. Beside all these, one of the greatest characteristics of the movement is that it avoided the lifeless scholastic discussions and liberated Vedanta from the shell of academism into which it was imprisoned for centuries. It brought Vedanta from caves and forests to everyday affairs of our worldly life. Once Swami Vivekananda said: 'Knowledge of the Advaita has been hidden too long in caves and forests. It has been given to me to rescue it from its seclusion and to carry it into the midst of family and social life. ... The drum of the Advaita shall be sounded in all places, in the bazaars, from the hill-tops and on the plains.'[9] Some of the characteristics of Neo-Vedantic movement may be divided into following divisions, such as unity in diversity, objectivity, practicability, and ideal of service and monasticism.

Unity In Diversity

Awareness of one's divinity and the one-

[9] Romain Rolland: Quoted in *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 14, 1947, p. 219.

ness amidst the diversity of the world, may be called the nerve-centre of Neo-Vedantic movement. India's strength rests upon these two principles. She has flourished when they have been well expressed and experienced, and degenerated when they have been forgotten. The sages of India long ago discovered and expounded the highest truth of *Ekaṁ sat viprā bahudhā vadanti* (That which exists is One, sages call it by various names). It is this realization and the spirit of catholicity that had made possible the unity and continuity of India's culture. Through this spirit, it has accommodated and re-adjusted even the contradictory faiths and doctrines and has never known either religious fanaticism or wars in the name of God. This ideal gave India its unique character of synthesis and comprehensive vision, not only as a universal brotherhood but also universal oneness. Neo-Vedanta gives logical and scientific explanation to this ideal of harmony and universality. It stresses synthesis and tolerance, rather than opposition and sectarianism. It recognizes the importance of all the religions and sects—high or low, as the various paths leading to the same Truth. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'as many religions, so many paths'. The same truth is reached by different individuals of different understandings, education, needs, tastes and social and geographical backgrounds. 'Truth is one,' says Sri Ramakrishna, 'only It is called by different names. All people are seeking the same Truth; the variance is due to climate, temperament, and name. A lake has many ghats. From one ghat the Hindus take water in jars and call it "jal". From another ghat the Mussalmans take water in leather bags and call it "pani". From a third the Christians take the same thing and call it "water". Suppose someone says that the thing is not "jal" but "pani", or that it is not "pani" but "water", or that it is not "water" but "jal". It would indeed be ridiculous. But this very thing is at the root of the friction among sects, their misunderstandings and quarrels. This is why people injure and kill one another, and shed blood, in the name of religion. But this is not good. Everyone is going toward God. They will all realize Him if they have sincerity and longing of heart.'[10] Swami Vivekananda by declaring the unique truth that man does not travel from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower truth to higher truth,[11] regards all religions and sects as the various ways leading to the same spiritual capital and sanctions all the means by which the Reality may be realized. He impressively emphasizes the doctrine of 'Iṣṭam'—the chosen Ideal, as the manifestation or expression of one and the same God, which every one has the right to choose, according to his need.

The old traditional Vedanta, as developed by Śaṅkara, is known as Advaita or non-dualism. Sometimes, it is also known as 'Kevalādvaita' (unqualified monism or rigorous monism), as the Ultimate Reality Brahman according to it, is devoid of all attributes and differences. The Neo-Vedanta is also Advaita as it also holds that Brahman is the Ultimate Reality and It is one without a second; 'but as distinguished from the traditional Vedanta of Śaṅkara, it is a synthetic Vedanta, which reconciles Dvaita or dualism and Advaita or non-dualism, and also other theories of Reality.'[12] Swami Vivekananda stresses that the various schools of Vedanta do not contradict one another but, '... they all

10 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, p. 349.

11 Swami Vivekananda: *The Complete Works*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, Vol. II, 1963, p. 327.

12 Dr. S. C. Chatterjee: *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume*, (available from) Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 14, p. 260.

necessitate each other, all fulfil each other, and one, as it were, is the stepping stone to the other, until the goal, the Advaita, the Tat Tvam Asi is reached.'[13] Like Vedanta, Neo-Vedanta also admits that it is non-dual Brahman only, by knowing which every thing is known and one becomes free from all sorrows, miseries and bondage. But as Advaita Vedanta lays more stress on the point of non-duality of Brahman, Neo-Vedanta elucidates and realizes that Brahman or Reality is All in All. Neo-Vedanta is essentially both a philosophy and religion in which reason and faith, noumenon and phenomena, art, science and religion are integrated without any contradiction. Swami Vivekananda and other leaders of the movement state that though the Reality is one, it has various manifestations; and therefore, the different beliefs and philosophies are but the expressions of the different aspects of the same Reality, like the photographs of the sun, taken from different distances.[14] Vivekananda appealed in his address at the final session of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, 'Help and not Fight', 'Assimilation and not Destruction', 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension'.[15]

Neo-Vedanta emphasizes the Ātman. Vivekananda says, 'the old religion said that he is an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is the atheist who does not believe in himself.'[16] The Ātman is ultimately one and spiritual. Neo-Vedanta holds that the destiny of man is not limited to his existence on earth. Man is divine, eternal and imperishable—one with the Ultimate Reality, in nature. Neo-Vedantic thinkers tried to spiritualize all the aspects of life, such as political, economic, educational, social, etc. Neo-Vedanta looks on both man and the universe neither as illusion nor as physical in essence, but spiritual in essential character. It is this spiritual view which gives rise to the ideals of tolerance, catholicity, universal love and sense of synthesis. Neo-Vedanta emphasizes more these ideals, than ever before. Swami Vivekananda observes, '. . . Our watchword, then, will be acceptance, and not exclusion. Not only tolerance, for so-called tolerance is often blasphemy, and I do not believe in it. . . . Tolerance means that I think that you are wrong and I am just allowing you to live. Is it not a blasphemy to think that you and I are allowing others to live? I accept all religions that were in the past and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him.'[17] Thus Neo-Vedanta is rooted in the great idea of the oneness of the Ātman and of all the universe which gives rise to the synthetic vision, universal love and harmony, as its special characteristics. It insists not only on tolerance, but also on universal acceptance and explains the particular through the general and moves on to the universal. It holds that every faith is true, however low it is, as the centre is the same towards which all are marching consciously or unconsciously. It emphasizes unity in diversity.

Objectivity

Like the traditional Vedanta, Neo-Vedanta is entirely objective. No doubt it accepts all the prophets and founders of all the faiths as the seers and the teachers of the Truth; but it does not accept personality as the ultimate fact of the Reality, as we find in other faiths, based on the historical existence of their founders. Śaṅkara calls

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13 Swami Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 324.
14 Ibid. Vol. II, 1963, p. 381.
15 Ibid. Vol. I, 1962, p. 24.
16 Ibid. Vol. II, 1963, p. 301.

17 Swami Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. II, 1963, pp. 373-74.

it 'vastutantram'[18] in opposition to 'puruṣatantram'. It stands on its own merit and greatness. It is open for all, without acknowledging any kind of distinctions and divisions of caste, country and creed. According to the leaders of Neo-Vedanta, Vedanta is open for all, it is everybody's property, everybody's birthright. It does not emphasize any particular church or ritual. It does not belong to a particular man, but to everybody, whosoever wants to realize the Truth. It is based not upon persons but upon principles, not upon books, but upon experience. It is eternal, absolute and impersonal. Its message is scientific and nonsectarian. It is so universal and catholic that it negates or excludes none. The theme of 'unity in diversity' or 'identity in differences' rather than that of barren unity, is one of the main pillars of Neo-Vedantic philosophy and religion. This reading of Vedanta is more wide and convincing than the earlier one which rejects the multiplicity of the universe and regards it as illusory.

Practicability

The philosophy and religion of Neo-Vedanta are often called by the name of 'practical Vedanta'. It emphasizes the practical side of Vedanta rather than the theoretical. Modern post-Hegelian western thought is mainly occupied with the subtle questions of dialectical analysis of epistemology and language. But in India Darśana means vision of truth, realization of Reality (tattvadarśana) and in India nobody was expected to take the role of a philosopher unless he had an inner and intuitive realization of the Reality. Here we find an intimate relationship of philosophy and life. Our ancient thinkers were the seers of truth. The philosopher as well as religious man tries to see the hidden reality in the phenomenal cosmos face to face. Indian philosophy or religion is not only conceptual understanding or metaphysical speculation, but has its foundation in the immediate datum of experience. Knowledge devoid of practicability is imperfect and a kind of burden to the holder. According to Neo-Vedanta the aim of learning is not 'knowledge for knowledge's sake' but to learn that truth which shall make men free. It holds that philosophy and religion are not a matter of dialectical warfare, conceptual studies or doctrinal conformity or even blind ritualistic practices, but direct spiritual experience. Therefore, Neo-Vedanta often avoids the abstract reasonings and discussions of mere intellectual faith like post-Śaṅkarite Advaitic philosophers and western thinkers.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the pioneer of the Neo-Vedantic movement, and Swami Vivekananda who gave philosophical explanation to the Master's teachings, were not like scholastic thinkers who were engaged in 'proving their own theories and refuting others'. Neo-Vedantic thinkers are not interested in a system of logical and linguistic analysis and lifeless speculative construction. They emphasize that Vedanta is to be lived, it is not enough to know it. The goal of Vedanta is the realization of the Ultimate Reality, to become one with It. The leaders of the movement were men of thought as well as of action. Their greatness was not one-sided. Their life was full of spiritual realization and humanistic actions for the good of humanity. They never look upon life merely as a perpetual exercise for conceptual knowledge or intellectual gymnastic. They presented a unique synthesis of head, heart and hand through their life and teachings. According to them thought, emotion, and action, when developed and reconciled in a single frame of unity, lead to mighty results. Swami Ram Tirtha, one of the followers of Swami Vivekananda, warns 'if

[18] Brahma-Sūtra I. i. 2 Śaṅkara's commentary.

Vedanta is not practised in everyday life, what is the use of it?'[19]

Vedanta presented by Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and other leaders was rational, scientific and practical and suited intrinsically to the modern man. They proved that Vedanta is not against material progress of the world. They brought down Vedanta from the heights of asceticism and formal renunciation to the field of everyday life of the common man. Dr. Satish Chandra Chatterjee rightly observes that Neo-Vedanta movement is 'a living Vedanta and not a dry and dead theory of the Vedanta. It is the Vedanta of the forests come back to our home, our city, and our society; it is the Vedanta entering in our ordinary life and conduct, it is the Vedanta that may inspire our individual life, social life and national life and international life.'[20]

Like traditional Vedanta, Neo-Vedanta also holds that to realize man's own Divinity as already present in him or to emancipate himself from all the bondage of not-self and little self and to realize his unity with the Infinite Brahman, is the ultimate aim of philosophy and religion. It maintains that Self or Brahman is not only the highest Reality but is also the highest value, the '*summum bonum* of life'. This aim of philosophy or religion is beyond the scope of logic. M. Hiriyanna says, 'Indian philosophy aims beyond logic. ... Philosophy in India did not take its rise in wonder or curiosity as it seems to have done in the West, rather under the pressure of a practical need arising from the presence of physical evil in life, ... philosophic endeavour was directed primarily to find a remedy from the ills of life and the consideration of metaphysical questions came in as a matter of course.'[21] But it was unfortunate that the post-Śaṅkara leaders of Vedanta mainly engaged themselves in scholastic discussions. Swami Vivekananda and other leaders of the movement were strictly convinced that the practical, scientific, concrete, dynamic, simple and inspiring interpretation of the Vedanta alone would again enable India once more to occupy its glorious past position in the world of thought. Not only this, but they also firmly believed that the national, political and social glory of India is also dependent upon the practical Vedanta. Therefore they felt the first requirement to avoid the lifeless scholastic discussions and to liberate Vedanta from the shell of academism into which it was imprisoned for centuries. In a letter, Swami Vivekananda wrote: 'The abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology.'[22] He presented Vedanta in such a simple and living manner that it would be accepted as the ideal of everyday life by all persons of the world. According to him Vedanta is even more practical than any branch of science.

Thus we find that the thinkers of Neo-Vedanta stress Vedanta as a way of life, which recommends several items of moral and spiritual disciplines. Vedanta not only teaches the nature of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality, but also gives practical guidance as to how an individual who believes in it should conduct his everyday life and realize the Reality. Philosophy as the knowledge of Reality is not only gaining or collecting knowledge, but also generating an

19 Swami Ram Tirtha: *In woods of God-Realization*, The Ram Tirtha Publication League, Lucknow, Vol. I, p. 127.

20 Dr. S. C. Chatterjee: op. cit. p. 281.

21 M. Hiriyanna: *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, George Allen and Unwin, pp. 18-19.

22 Swami Vivekananda: op. cit. Vol. V, 1959, p. 104.

intense love and faith in these doctrines and act according to them. Vedanta in its modern phase became so practical that it could not only be applied in individual life, but also in all aspects of public life—social, national and international. Vedantic view of 'practicability' is wide and universal, unlike the limited view of 'pragmatism'. It is this practical side of Vedanta which attracted the western thinkers. Gerald Heard says, 'A new religion has come into history that is western Vedanta.'[23] Further he says, '... the appearance of Vedanta in the west as a living religion and not as an academic study ... where were man to find a religion that was intense but not cruelly narrow, wide but not vague, loose but not tepid? Vedanta in the broad range ... is the answer.'[24]

IDEAL OF SERVICE AND NEW ORIENTATION OF MONASTIC LIFE

The ethics of Neo-Vedanta is mainly based on the ideals of service and renunciation. Probably no one has laid stress so much on both in the history of moral philosophy as Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna and the other thinkers of the movement. They gave a revolutionary turn to the Vedantic ideals and stated that one could easily realize God through serving humanity. Without the spirit of renunciation, service in the true sense is impossible and the Highest Good cannot be realized. It has rightly been said that 'Renunciation and service were the alpha and omega of his life. He, in fact, was the veritable embodiment of renunciation and service'.[25]

For Neo-Vedanta, renunciation does not mean escapism, asceticism, pessimism or negativism towards the world, relations and possessions. It is wrong to identify it with the attitude of other-worldliness or retirement to the forest. According to it, renunciation means the renunciation of the limited centres of self, body-consciousness, egoity, selfishness, attachments and sense of allurements.[26] Swami Vivekananda maintains both are the national ideals of India. Renunciation leads to universal love, selfless service to all the beings great or small and realization of Brahman through it. In a poem he says:

From highest Brahman to the yonder worm,
And to the very minutest atom.
Everywhere is the same God, the All-Love;
Friend, offer mind, soul, body, at their feet.

These are His manifold forms before,
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?
Who loves all beings, without distinction,
He indeed is worshipping best his God.[27]

The idea of service of Neo-Vedanta is very high and humble. It is absolutely different from the theory of Christian charity, Buddhists' humanitarianism and general understanding, where the sufferer (Jīva) is looked upon only as an individual and is served with the feeling of pity, sympathy, kindness and superiority. Neo-Vedatic thinkers from Sri Ramakrishna to Mahatma Gandhi hold that real worship of God is the service of humanity; service of the poor, the downtrodden and the wretched. Jīva is Śiva and none else. To serve is to worship. But the effect of that service is not to be thought of as the welfare of others, but as the purification of oneself. Service should not be done from the motive of kindness or compassion, but from gratefulness, as it is an opportunity, a privilege,

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[23] Gerald Heard: *Vedanta for Modern Man*, ed. by Christopher Isherwood, Harper and Brothers, New York, First Edition, p. 1.

[24] Ibid. p. 2.

[25] Swami Sambuddhananda: *Swami Vivekananda centenary Memorial Volume*, p. 316.

[26] Vide Swami Vivekananda: op. cit. Vol. II, 1963, p. 63, and 171.

[27] Swami Vivekananda: op. cit. Vol. IV, 1962, p. 496.

which one avails oneself of. 'Look upon every man, woman, and every one as God,' says Vivekananda. 'You cannot help anyone, you can only serve.'[28] Further he says, 'All the work you do is subjective, is done for your own benefit. ... Cut out this word "help" from your mind. You cannot help; it is blaspheming ... You worship.'[29] Criticizing the general understanding of service, he says, 'Do not stand on a high pedestal and take five cents in your hand and say, "Here, my poor man", but be grateful that the poor man is there, so that by making a gift to him, you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed, but it is the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world, and thus become pure and perfect.'[30]

> 'This is the gist of all worship—to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Śiva in the poor, in the weak and in the diseased, really worships Śiva; and if he sees Śiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary.'[31]

He declared that it would be a great sin to teach Vedanta to those who are hungry and miserable, instead of giving them bread. He adds his own mantras, 'daridra devo bhava, mūrkha devo bhava', among the mantras of Upaniṣads such as 'matṛdevo bhava, pitṛdevo bhava' etc. Service of the poor, the weak and the distressed with the feeling of worship of God, thus became a spiritual discipline of high order through which one could attain realization of Brahman. It is for this reason, that some critics called Neo-Vedanta also as 'humanistic Advaitism' (mānavādvaita). But the humanism of Neo-Vedanta is essentially different from the humanism of the West, which 'is a protest against naturalism on the one side and religion on the other.'[32]

The leaders of Neo-Vedanta revived and re-oriented the old monastic ideal of living alone, untouched by the people for the liberation of one's own self; of leading the life of inactivism and solitude. According to them the aim of monastic life is the service and upliftment of suffering humanity. Asceticism is not running away from life. Swami Vivekananda criticized its modern form as it has become the shelter of illiterate, dull and inactive persons, who are nothing more than a kind of burden to the society. He also disfavoured the old idea of retirement to the forest to lead a lonely life for only one's own emancipation, which really is also a kind of selfishness. Swami Vivekananda felt the necessity to organize and to revitalize the ideals of renunciation and service and so he organized a new monastic Order in the name of 'Sri Ramakrishna Order of Monks' for the perfection of one's own self and the good of the world. According to him the God-intoxicated sannyasins should be the most devoted servants of humanity. They should occupy themselves in the service of man and work with selfless desire. He holds that the decline of monastic life is also one of the main causes of the downfall of Hinduism. Explaining the ideal he says: 'For the good of the many, for the happiness of the many is the Sannyasin born the Sannyasin, verily, is born into this world to lay down his life for others, to stop the bitter cries of men, to wipe the tears of the widow, to bring peace to the soul of the bereaved mother, to equip the ignorant masses for the struggle for existence, to accomplish the secular and spiritual well-

(*Contd. on p.* 23)

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28 Swami Vivekananda: op. cit. Vol. III, p. 246.
29 Ibid. Vol. V. pp. 245-6.
30 Ibid. Vol. I, p. 76.
31 Ibid. Vol. III, pp. 141-2.
32 Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: *An idealistic View of Life*, p. 48.



THE WISE HERO

The embattled army camp presented itself full of soldiers, variously preoccupied. Among them, however, stood out one who was admired by his colleagues as well as commanders for his exemplary endurance and courage under diverse circumstances. On that particular morning one noticed something unusual about him. Standing in front of his tent, he was apparently absorbed in thought. This engrossment within himself went on and on, hour by hour. Noon arrived and then evening; even night closed in—yet he was there standing as he was. Only with the rising of the sun the next morning, did this great meditation, this *samādhi*, conclude. Saluting the sun reverently he left the spot.

What transpired within, then, could have been known only to himself. Later events, however, lead one to the conclusion that this must have been the origin of his life-mission, that of awakening the light of reason among his fellow men. An irresistible inner urge, a 'divine command' drove him along this path. But the vast majority of mankind find more light inconvenient and they resist it. Specially, people cannot bear to be shown up as 'ignorant' even though they are so. It is no wonder that our hero found the course of his 'peace-time mission' much tougher than his wartime missions. The pride and prejudice of some of those whom he tried to enlighten were so strong that he had to pay the 'ultimate price'.

This was Socrates, of Athens, who was declared by the Delphi Oracle as the 'Wisest man in Athens', some 2500 years ago. Uncouth and even ugly without, to discerning eyes he was all 'golden and divinely beautiful' within. About the utterance of the Oracle, he declared with humour and humility, 'The Oracle says that no man is wiser than Socrates because though we are all ignorant I (Socrates) am aware of my ignorance but others are not!' He did not presume to impart wisdom to others; he was only helping them to know their own limitations. He was only the 'cross-examiner'. His character and words, wit and wisdom were a powerful attraction to the youth who gathered beside him and hung on his words. The elders, who found that not only was their ignorance exposed but their young also cared more for Socrates than for themselves, naturally became enraged and jealous. It was not long before they charged Socrates of 'corrupting the young'. He was brought to public trial and subsequently found guilty and sentenced to death.

It was apparent to fair-minded persons that the charges were wrong. His personal

friends, wise to the ways of the world, were very keen that he should defend himself and somehow free himself from the consequences of such proceedings. But Socrates himself was calm, unperturbed, unrepentant. A man of worth, he declared, would value right and wrong more than life and death. He did not desert his post assigned to him by men, in the face of death; could he ever do that in regard to the post where *God* had placed him? No power on earth, whether an angry mob or a despotic government, could make him do what he was sure was wrong or prevent him from pursuing what was right.

The only public office he ever held was that of a Senator. During that period some of the Generals of Athens, after a battle, were charged with neglect of duty, in failing to recover the bodies of their dead. The Senate unjustly and illegally resolved to leave the judgement to popular vote instead of giving a formal and fair trial. Alone of all, Socrates stood up against this blatant wrong. Threats of suspension and arrest, the clamour of an angry mob or even the fear of imprisonment and death—nothing could check him. And though it was for just one day, when it was his turn to be the presiding officer, he refused to allow the wrong procedure to take effect in spite of the fact that his successor the next day yielded to the mob.

On another occasion, Socrates had repeated this performance. Athens was then in the hands of a gang of tyrants; it was a reign of terror when political opponents and private enemies were alike liquidated as a matter of course. Wishing to implicate as many others as possible in their own crime, the tyrants would use all kinds of men as instruments of assassination. And so it was that Socrates and four others were ordered to bring one Leon from Salamis to Athens to be murdered. The other four dared not disobey the order, afraid for their own lives, and did bring Leon with them. But Socrates just disobeyed the order and went home. Indeed he cared not a straw for death; but he was tremendously concerned about right and wrong. He even went further and condemned the tyrants for these political murders.

Being what he was, he would not also accept an acquittal conditional to giving up his mission. Neither would he appeal to the compassion of the judges, a normally accepted procedure. Such conduct would be unworthy of him and of Athens; besides the judges had been sworn to decide according to law, and to appeal to their feelings against their considered judgement would be trying to make them forswear themselves!

The voting took place and Socrates was condemned to death. But he would not hold his peace even to save his life. 'Athenians! I hold you in the highest regard and love but I will obey God rather than you.' And in the service of God and Truth he gave up his life.

While in prison, awaiting the last day, his intimate friends and 'disciples' tried their best to save him from the sentence. One of them, Crito, passionately implored him to escape and save himself. It could all be arranged easily. But Socrates would have none of it. If he did so he would be wronging the state; he would be a party to destroying the state of which he was a citizen. A city in which private individuals set aside, at their will, the judicial decisions and laws of the state cannot survive. It may be that an individual is condemned unjustly; then the laws are either bad, or badly administered. Still, the individual may not take the matter into his own hands. The members of all social bodies, and therefore of the state, must sacrifice their individual wills, more or less, to the whole to which they belong. The constituents, the individuals, must obey the rules or laws of the whole, or it will perish.

He would, therefore, not retaliate on the state and destroy it; he would rather himself submit to death.

Were he to escape, the laws would ask of him why he was trying to destroy them. Had he not agreed to be bound by them? He had agreed fully to abide by them and his consent had not been extracted from him by force or fraud. He was free to have gone elsewhere if he was not satisfied but he had remained a contented citizen all these long years. And even if he ran away, where could he go to? Decent men and cities would look down upon him as a lawless person. Let him stay there and die; he may go away as an injured man but the laws of the other world would receive him kindly.

Knowing nothing certainly of what would come after death, and having no sure hope of reward in the next world, yet Socrates resolutely chose to die than desert the post of Truth, or do what he believed to be wrong.

—Explorer.

Source: Plato's "Trial & Death of Socrates"

(*Contd. from p.* 20)

being of all ....'[33] Sri Ramakrishna himself inspired Vivekananda to serve humanity instead of being absorbed in 'Samādhi', and seeking his own liberation. The Ramakrishna Mission founded by Swami Vivekananda is engaged in serving humanity by running so many educational, cultural institutions, and hospitals, doing other philanthropic works and spiritual ministry in both the hemispheres with the aim to 'be God' oneself and help others also to 'be God'. Neo-Vedanta holds that God-realization should not be the sole object of monks, but they should serve humanity with the utmost humility and love.

[33] Swami Vivekananda: op. cit., Vol. L, 1956, p. 511.

THE MESSAGE OF KANYĀKUMĀRI*

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

It is a great honour to all of us that we are assembled here at Kanyākumāri, at this sacred spot of India, this morning when we have with us our Prime Minister Shrimati Indira Gandhi to participate in the dedication celebrations of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial. Kanyākumāri has become a real symbol of the great national aspirations and ideals and struggles which are ahead of us in the modern age. Swami Vivekananda's meditation on the rock at Kanyākumāri brings before us the vision of a new India in the process of realization.

THE ETERNAL MESSAGE OF OUR HIMALAYAS

The mighty Himalayas to the far north have been the symbol of India and her focus of national inspiration during all these millennia of our history; and the Himalayas represent the spirit of meditation, the spirit of inwardness. That spirit gave to humanity the Vedāntic vision of human excellence, namely, his inborn divinity. India has written a luminous chapter in the history of man, in the history of the tremendous development in his life of inwardness, meditation, and transcendentalism, in that immortal literature of our nation, namely, the Upanishads. A little later came the great Buddha who added a fresh chapter of re-authentication, bright and glorious, to this great ideal and technique of meditation, to this heroic struggle of man rising above his sensate level, of man achieving inner penetration and experiencing and expressing his profound spiritual dimension, making for universality in his vision and sympathy.

Today we have another symbol and centre of inspiration for India in this Kanyākumāri in the far south, impressively situated at the confluence of the three oceans. Kanyākumāri represents the expression of that innate divinity of man, and of the consequent universality in his vision and sympathy, in the practical field of individual and collective life and endeavour; it represents what Vivekananda calls *Practical Vedānta.*

THE NEW MESSAGE OF KANYAKUMARI

For centuries we have prayed and meditated and undergone various austerities; we have achieved thereby a proficiency and greatness in that discipline of the inner life and built up a vast national reservoir of spiritual energy. Swami Vivekananda realized during his meditations on this Kanyākumāri rock that today's problems of our nation call for a dedication of these great energies of our culture to the urgent work of the social, economic, cultural and all-round betterment of the millions of our people. That calls for the expression of the national spiritual energies in the field of work, of efficient, co-operative work. And the message which Kanyākumāri conveys to us today, therefore, is *meditation combined with action,* resulting in the evolution of a perfect national character, and synthesizing our age-old moral and spiritual efficiency with modern scientific and technical efficiency.

It is this new emphasis on work, on intelligent, co-operative, team work, for the betterment of the lives of millions and millions of human beings, that is symbolized

* Presidential speech at the public meeting held at Kanyākumāri and addressed by the Prime Minister of India, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, on 16.9.70, in connection with the two-month long celebrations organized by the Vivekananda Rock Memorial committee, for the dedication of the Vivekananda Memorial.

in this Kanyākumāri. For it was here that Swami Vivekananda discovered that, in spite of the high spiritual dimensions of our great culture, in spite of our producing some of the most outstanding spiritual geniuses of the world, our culture had neglected our common men and women as a result of our neglect of the material and socio-political aspects of human life, a neglect which became cruel in recent centuries. Today we need to emphasise this aspect of human life, and uphold the philosophy relevant to it, namely, intelligent, co-operative work. Poverty and social backwardness cannot be removed by that prayer and meditation and ritual which do not result in efficient action. Poverty cannot be removed by ritualism, much less by religious magic, by rituals and ceremonies taken as the be-all and end-all of religion; their efficacy has to be proved by their fruits of purity of character and work-efficiency, behind which lies a deep concern for man, for the divine in the heart of man. This is the call of Kanyākumāri to all our religions.

Kanyākumāri today proclaims the close spiritual kinship of such action with meditation. It proclaims the technique by which vision can flow into action, by which love of God can flow into the love and service of man. In Kanyākumāri, India's spiritual quest, which mostly found its channel of expression in the *tapas* of inwardness, of meditation, through the inspiration of the Himalayas, now finds a new channel of outward expression in dedicated action. That is the inspiration that Swami Vivekananda received from Kanyākumāri during the intense hours he spent here towards the end of 1892. He discovered his life's mission on this rock.

The ancient sacred temple to the Divine Mother in this very Kanyākumāri proclaims this truth; for here, the Divine Mother is worshipped as a *Kanyākumāri*, youthful maiden, engaged in *tapas*. And She represents the very spirit of India, ever-aging but never old, ever youthful in vitality and beauty and charm.

Vivekananda was deeply impressed by the enormous spiritual energies that India had accumulated by her long record of *tapas*. And his mission was to cut a perennial outlet channel of social action from this reservoir, keeping at the same time its inlet channel of inward meditation flowing clean and steady. The waters of such social action alone have the energy and power to fertilize the fields of individual and collective life in a fundamental way; for it alone can provide the root nourishment to the human personality, with its economic, political, intellectual, and moral dimensions getting nourished as a by-product, just as a tree gets fundamentally nourished by the watering of its roots but not by the watering of its leaves and twigs and trunk. Says Vivekananda in one of his great utterances voicing man's awakening to his inborn divine nature:

'Teach yourself, teach every one, his real nature; call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, everything great and glorious will come, when the sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.'

The Tragic Face of India

Swami Vivekananda's meditations on the Kanyākumāri rock found explosive expression immediately after in the message of dynamic spirituality which he delivered in America, England, and India during the remaining ten years of his life, a message comprehensive of man's total welfare, material as well as spiritual.

Swami Vivekananda was inspired by the great truth discovered by the ancient sages of India and conveyed to humanity at large by that immortal literature of our philosophical and spiritual tradition, namely, the

Upanishads, that the true glory of man lies in his inalienable, divine, immortal Self, the Ātman. He had seen in his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, the full manifestation of this human glory; he had verified this truth of man in his own life as well. But when, after the passing away of his Master in 1886, he went round his country as a *parivrājaka* or wandering monk, and lived with its princes and peasants, its brahmins and untouchables, its poor and rich, in intimate communion with his people, he was deeply grieved to see the tragic face of the real India, the millions of battered, bruised and broken men and women of his country. Evidently, that glory of the human spirit proclaimed by his nation's books and saints had not passed on to the nation's multitudes. They bore the mark of arrested growth due to continued neglect, and also oppressions, first, by invaders coming from without and, later, by invaders and oppressors bred within the country. This had made India a *creature* of history instead of being its *creator*, as she was for long ages. Other nations created history, and India became its victim century after century. This was the price India was forced to pay, said Swami Vivekananda, for her continued neglect and oppression of her common people. And he summoned modern India to reverse this trend and give back to the people their lost individuality and restore them to their human dignity and glory. He proclaimed this to be the central theme of the modern Indian awakening, the central purpose of his *Practical Vedānta*. Said he about the Indian masses in one of his letters:

'Trodden under the foot of the Hindu, Mussalman, or Christian, they have come to think that they are born to be trodden under the foot of everybody who has money enough in his pocket. They are to be given back their individuality. They are to be educated.... Our duty is to put the chemicals together, the crystallization will come through God's laws. Let us put ideas into their heads. Now this means educating the masses.'

Vivekananda's Summons to Our Intelligentsia

The masses must be roused, made aware of their own human dignity, their own divine heritage. This is the work he has set before our people today. He summons the intelligentsia of our country, our young educated citizens, to realize their alignment with the common people of their nation. Too long have our intelligentsia been aligned with the small upper strata of the society, the wealthy and the holders of power, ever yearning to catch a glance from them and get a crumb of their wealth and power. By so doing, our intelligentsia reduced itself to being the tail-end of an unjust social order, static and uncreative, and reduced itself also to a spiritually bankrupt and socially ineffective group. Certainly, human intelligence must have a higher role to play; certainly, it can function creatively to carry human evolution forward. Vivekananda invites them today to play this new role in their nation, the role of creative agents of social change, dynamic agents of free India to diffuse the blessings of that freedom among the nation's millions, so that Indian society may progressively bear the impress of the Upanishadic vision of human glory and dignity. That calls for the capturing by our intelligentsia, whether in the professions, the union and state services, or in other fields, of a dynamic character-efficiency which is the product of intelligence yoked to patriotic dedication and service. They need to respond to the following truth uttered by Vivekananda:

Renunciation and service are the twin ideals of India; intensify her in those channels, the rest will take care of itself.

It is the renunciation of the lower, trivial, self and the manifestation of the higher self whose spontaneous channel of expression is the mood and act of service. Such renunciation and service form a new form of *tapas* or austerity, constructive and creative, yielding the twin fruits of spiritual growth of the person who serves and the all-round growth of the nation served. 'Be and Make' is the motto that Swamiji has therefore given us: Be men yourselves and stand on your feet and make men of others by helping them also to stand on their feet. It is only through this human transformation, said Vivekananda, that we shall be able to forge a healthy body-politic for the ever-healthy, eternal, soul of our mother India. And India means a sixth of the human race. Its health is as much an international as a national concern in this post-war age. But our own national responsibility is primary.

The Promise of the Present to the Future

Swamiji reminded us again and again that the soul of India is strong and pure. That is the Eternal India. It has inspired the nations of the world again and again. In every contemporary period of world history, nations outside, civilizations outside, have always sought to come in touch with its eternal soul, to learn from its ancient wisdom. But, during the past few centuries, there has been a spiritual malnutrition in our body-politic; it had consequently suffered from many social ailments, which had made it weak and largely ineffective, both within the nation and without. It had lost its own former greatness and glory. Today we need to build a new body for that eternal soul of our nation. When these two become conjoined together, the healthy and eternal soul finding its vehicle in a healthy and dynamic body-politic, we shall see a resurgence of India, before which all her past resurgences will pale into secondary achivements.

This is the promise of the present to the future, according to Swami Vivekananda. A part of the promise has been realized by our achievement of political independence in 1947 and the resulting freedom to shape our own destiny. We then gave ourselves a constitution which, for the first time in our long history, is based upon the people of India. All our previous political states derived their strength from emperors, kings, or military conquerers. The people had played no part and found no place in them. For the first time in the five thousand years of our history, we have been able to evolve a political state which derives its strength and sanction from 'We, the people of India'. Our constitution embodies the vision of human dignity and glory upheld in our ancient spiritual and philosophical tradition and in the modern socio-political humanistic heritage, and breathes the will to translate that vision into social realities. The latter is the role which our sovereign democratic state is called upon to play and to fulfil. Our state has to respond to the lofty visions embodied in the constitution, on the one side, and to the mounting urges and aspirations of the Indian people, on the other. Our state can play this high role effectively only if the people of India realise the responsibilities and opportunities of their citizenship of free India. It is to such free and responsible citizens, who are called to the service of the nation in the union and state and panchayat services, in the public and private industrial undertakings, and in the educational, medical, and other professions, that Vivekananda's message goes today with a unique relevance and force so that they may become effective agents of the national development purposes, purposes which he had formulated in the following words in one of his letters written from Japan in 1893:

'... to struggle unto life and death to bring about a new state of things—sympathy for the poor and bread to their hungry mouths, enlightenment to the people at large, and struggle unto death to make men of them who have been brought to the level of beasts by the tyranny of your forefathers.'

The Junction of Two Spiritual Streams

This is what he presented to the people of India as practical religion and practical politics in one, the twin aspects of his philosophy of *Practical Vedānta*. He used to quote his Master's pungent words relating to religion as static worldly piety or piety-fringed worldliness: 'Religion is not for empty bellies'. We need the religion of work, the discipline of intelligent, co-operative, team work, to destroy the demon of hunger. This is the *Yoga* of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, with its message of dynamic spirituality conveyed in three words: *Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam—Yoga* is efficiency, dexterity, in action'. In contemporary post-independence India, where the unhealthy politics of the sheer pursuit of power has ousted the healthy politics of service, we need a new dictum to complement that dictum of Sri Ramakrishna, namely, 'Politics is not for empty bellies'. The problems of poverty and general backwardness can be successfully tackled only by a politics of service; and such politics is what is inspired by a sense of national vision and dedication. 'God and truth are the only politics in the world, all else is trash', says Vivekananda. Our nation has to infuse this sense of dedication for the service of the common man in our politics and administration. This is the spirituality of politics; and the other is the spirituality of practical religion. *These two rivers of spirituality need to flow together today to fertilize the life of our people in a fundamental way.* Our people need healthy political education. Their awakened political sense will be the perennial strength of our infant democratic state.

It is in such life and work that we shall manifest the spirit of Vivekananda. It is by such work that we shall pay our tribute to the memory of this great teacher, this lover of man, who lives in spirit in the hearts of our millions, in the hearts of millions in all parts of the world. There is no greater work for us today than to inspire ourselves with that vision of Vivekananda, the vision of India's greatness and glory, and with the resolve to translate that vision into our social experiment and experience. This is the way by which we can endow our nation with a healthy body-politic; this is the guarantee of the steady moral and spiritual uplift of not only our own people, but of the rest of the world as well.

India has always exercised a fascination for all contemporary civilizations during the millennia of her history. There is much hunger today in the rest of the world for that bread of spirituality which India has always manufactured and accumulated for the good of mankind. It is true that when we look around us today we don't see evidences of that spirituality on the surface of our national life. That surface greets us with much that is unspiritual, much that is distressing and depressing. But in the depths of our national consciousness Vivekananda experienced the tangible pulsations of the spiritual energy resources of our nation. We need to master and apply the technical know-how of bringing these spiritual energy resources to the surface of life in order to become available to our people so as to overcome the spiritual and moral malnutrition of our nation, side by side with our mastering and applying the technical know-how of bringing to the surface the physical energy resources of our nation to overcome our material backwardness.

This technical know-how of the science of spirituality teaches us that it can be mastered and applied by every citizen in every field of life—in the fields and factories, in the home and offices, everywhere. None need to go to a forest or a cave to become spiritual, except to intensify the spirituality gained in life and work; for this science teaches us that spirituality is the birthright of one and all, that the Ātman is our true nature, that the kingdom of heaven is within us, and that life and action are the field, the *Kurukshetra*, for the culture of our spiritual awareness. This is the great message of *Practical Vedānta* of Swami Vivekananda, the perennial message of dynamic and comprehensive spirituality of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

Worldliness versus Life in the World

In the simple, humble, duties and joys of life, man can cultivate and manifest the divine that is within him, making for compassion, making for social concern, making for love and service. This is the type of practical spirituality which has to become the character-strength of every citizen in our country. Too long have we made a distinction between life in the world and life of religion. And we have been widening that gulf century after century, inspite of the clear and definite teaching of the *Gītā*. Ramakrishna and Vivekananda came to bridge this gulf between life and religion. In the words of Ramakrishna, wherein the essence of the philosophy of Vedānta, the message of the *Gītā*, is given in a brief utterance:

'Live in the world; but don't allow worldliness to enter into you'.

Worldliness should not be allowed to enter our hearts; if it enters, life will become heavy with selfishness and pettiness, jealousy and exploitation, making for stagnation. But with the stirring of the ever-present divinity in the heart, life flows out in a spirit of love and service, making for dynamism and progress. So Ramakrishna adds, by way of an illustration:

'The boat will be on water but water should not be in the boat. That is the wrong place for the water and bad for the boat. For, then, the boat will become stagnant and unfit for the purpose for which it is meant.'

So when worldliness enters the human heart, it makes for the stagnation of *saṁsāra*, the stagnation of the little self of 'I' and 'mine', resulting in exploitation, social tension, violence; human life then becomes, in the words of Hobbes, 'short, nasty, and brutish'. That is what happened to us during the last few centuries. Inspite of our piety, inspite of our religiosity, which were becoming increasingly showy, noisy, and fuzzy, we remained essentially worldly, we were mainly selfish and self-centred. We practised what may be termed a piety-fringed worldliness, which could not generate ethical sense, human concern, or character-efficiency. We exploited each other and reduced our collective life to elementary levels. Vivekananda rescued us from that false idea of religion as static piety and inspired us with his message of religion as dynamic spirituality, with its twin expressions of renunciation and service.

Twin Criteria of National Development

And Kanyākumāri represents this great message of dynamic spirituality, the fruit of *Practical Vedānta*, whereby Eternal India's energy of spiritual vision becomes channelized into socially creative ends and purposes, endowing the nation with the resources of an ever-increasing spirituality, side by side with the other type of strength and resource, namely, physical energy resources, which are being increasingly generated and utilized by our five-year plans of economic development. The per capita production and consumption of this latter

energy is the accepted criterion to assess the development of a country. According to this criterion, India today is far behind, tenth or twelfth among the nations, with America leading, followed by USSR, Germany, Japan, U.K. and so on. But India is catching up, with the steady implementation of her development programmes. Very soon we shall be developing a national electrical grid, connecting every region of our vast country with every other region, and helping to fasten the pace of our industrial growth and brighten the environment of the life of our people.

But this alone will not make for human fulfilment. The criterion of per capita production and consumption of physical energy with respect to national development is *a necessary* but *not a sufficient* criterion. Humanity today in several nations which have fulfilled this criterion and are classed as highly developed, is not experiencing the expected sense of fulfilment. Vivekananda had therefore proposed more than seventy years ago, after a penetrating study of the philosophy of man behind modern western civilization, a second criterion of human development, not opposed but complementary to that first criterion, namely, the per capita production and consumption of spiritual energy. He wanted India to retain her historically acquired hold on the science and technical know-how of this unique energy generation and consumption and to share it with the rest of humanity, while learning from the advanced nations the know-how of the physical sciences and technology. He wanted India to achieve a happy synthesis of the sciences of physical nature and the science of man, with a view to enriching man externally and internally, materially and spiritually.

CONCLUSION

We are very happy that our Prime Minister is with us this morning. She has studied Vivekananda literature. We had our President Mr. V. V. Giri, the first servant of our nation, on the first day of the inauguration of this Vivekananda Rock Memorial two weeks ago. And today we have with us our Prime Minister, the second servant of our nation, who has spared a day for this national memorial out of her busy schedule. And we shall be happy to listen to her words on this occasion, words which will cheer up our nation. For there is a sense of depression all round. This depression can be removed by the energy of that vision of man and his excellence given to us by Swami Vivekananda who was essentially a teacher of strength and fearlessness. I now request our Prime Minister to deliver her speech and give to the nation a touch of that message of hope, of courage, and of dedication.

RELEVANCE OF VIVEKANANDA'S APPROACH TO THE PRESENT-DAY PROBLEMS

SRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI

Swami Vivekananda and other great leaders of Indian thought have told us that all great qualities must come from within us. Others can show the path but whether to follow that path or not is the responsibility of each individual.

The grand words that inspire us in every page, in every saying of Swami Vivekananda are courage, strength, self-reliance and faith. This is what India has needed and what India needs today. We have been the inheritors of a truly great culture and a truly great tradition. How has he analysed our national illness? How has he pointed out the shaping of our nation? Swami Ranganathananda's words, spoken just now, give some indication that we are in no way near living up to our great traditions and our great heritage. And we have, in a way, given up their importance by reducing them to mere ritual and routine. We have forgotten that the ritual, the routine, is merely a way which could lead us to something and is not an end in itself.

The greatness of Swami Vivekananda lay not only in his great intellectual power and erudition but also in his burning passion to do good not only to the whole of India but to the entire world. His special intellectual gift was that he was keenly aware of the forces at work in the modern world. Just before coming here, I looked at the exhibition on Swamiji's life and mission, which has been arranged here. And it was remarkable how Swamiji could, even at that time, visualize the present-day problems and could know fully well, then, the trends at work in modern times.

Swami Ranganathananda spoke, just now, of the need for removing economic poverty. We are pledged to do that. We are trying to take various steps which can lead us forward in that direction. We do not know if we would succeed. We know only that we must try, as far as we can, to do this with all the strength that we have.

But again it may be pointed out that the eradication of poverty is not enough for any nation. We have to eradicate spiritual poverty also. We have many words of wisdom and guidance from Swami Vivekananda and other great spiritual leaders. But if there is a lacuna in the thinking of the modern man, it is as regards action. The modern man has got a great desire to find the shortest cut, a great desire to have the path made easier for him. And the easier we make it or the more comforts we get, the poorer we become in other ways. But I think that there is a way of reconciling the two and I think, perhaps, India can find that way. But I don't think that it is easy for India or for anybody else to find it.

We know today that materialism whether of the capitalist variety in the West or of the Communist variety in what is called the East—really, it is also of the West—have both failed to answer questions which man asks for himself. Both have solved some problems, but created many new questions. It was essential to solve these problems. We could not have the world divided into the rich and the poor; we could not afford to keep the vast majority of mankind not being regarded as part of the human race. Some of these problems exist in our country. To improve them materially was the first step, but the other step is no less essential. Man cannot be at peace with the world unless he is at peace with himself. This is one step that has given us an understanding of such forces. Man has

mastered nature, not by force, but by trying to understand these forces. That is why science has succeeded where magic has failed.

We understand some forces of nature and as we understand them, we discover that there are many other forces which are still beyond our understanding. We have not even attempted to understand this small creature, a very tiny speck in the universe, which we call man. This is what our philosophy has tried to do, but as I said earlier, that part most of us have conveniently ignored.

I spoke of the new questions being raised. It is good that questions are raised, because, by doubting, we are led to inquire and by inquiring we are likely to understand. Today, there is a ferment in India of one kind and in the entire world of another kind. And the ferment is there because many of the young people find fault with the old values. Does that mean that old values are wanting? I don't think that is so. But I do think that because we of the older generation have not lived up to the older values, the young people wonder whether they can eulogize these values or not. Therefore they try to search new paths. To us, some of these paths, some of these experiments, do not make sense. But if through this approach of trial and error we can find the truth at last, I think that even the upheaval will have served a purpose. The world also has these problems as we have in our own country. Swamiji and many other great persons have shown that all this variety was really a part of one great unity and that we always should grasp this unity. And science itself is nothing else than the quest to discover unity in the wide variety of our experience.

There is one other word that Swamiji has often used in his lectures and that word is 'fearlessness', boldness. I remember a story he told of how he was once being chased by monkeys. The faster he ran, the faster the monkeys ran and coped up with him. And then somebody suggested, 'Don't run, face them, face the brutes!' And when he faced them, the monkeys withdrew and went away. This is true of most problems of the world. If you think that a problem is too big and you run away from it, it presses and presses you further and ultimately devours you. But if you face it with courage, you have a chance of solving it. And even if you don't solve it, it is still worth the struggle, because through your experience, someone else will be in a better position to solve it later.

Swamiji preached the brotherhood of man. In all nations, this is today the most potent of slogans, the most potent of forces. But, here again the strength has to come from man himself.

Swami Ranganathananda just now spoke of politics entering all activities of life. It is not politics which is bad but what we make of politics. In fact, I think that nothing in life is itself good or bad, but what we put into it or take out of it, matters. We have made politics a question of individual bickerings and individual selfishness, instead of what it is supposed to be, that is, a vast movement for an entire people, a movement towards raising the people economically as well as morally and spiritually. This is what politics should be. And if it is that kind of politics, then it should permeate all our lives. That is what Gandhiji did. He took great religious ideals and put them to work for social service, put them to work in the daily lives of people not as high ideals but as practical steps to gain our goal. Today, all have accepted our goal; but, there may be some doubting whether we are really moving towards it because of the thorns and stones on our feet. The thorns and stones will always be there, no matter what journey we undertake and they were there when we

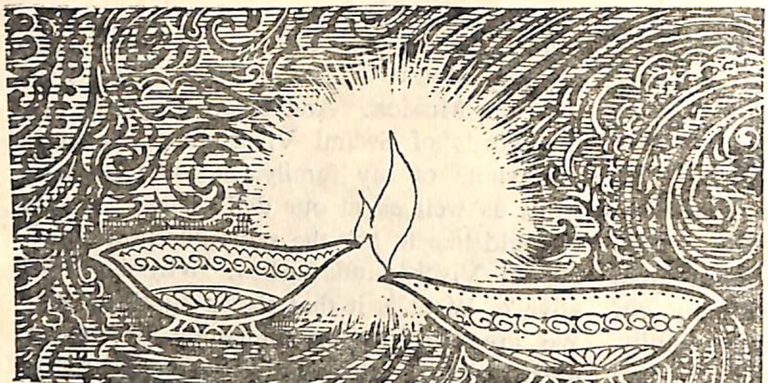
fought for freedom. They were there in the path of Swami Vivekananda and all great reformers of our country and other countries, but these people could go ahead because they did not look down to their feet, but upwards towards light and towards their goal. We should direct our vision towards our goal, which is indeed a great goal, because it encompasses not only our own country but the whole of humanity. India has indeed been fortunate that it had so many leaders in our political movements, in our movements of religious reforms, in our movements of social reforms, who have raised the vision of our people, giving them guidance not only in understanding the past but in trying to understand and move towards the future.

I had the special privilege of being introduced to the writings, sayings and the life of Swami Vivekananda and to the Ramakrishna Mission. That was when I was very small. In fact both my parents and especially my mother had very close connections with the Mission. And I can truly say that the words of Swami Vivekananda inspired the whole of my family, in our political work as well as in our daily lives. Today, I would like to ask the same question which Swami Vivekananda asked, 'Why is India alive ? What is it that she is fighting for ?' We are fighting for something which we must nourish. But, without work and sacrifice in our lives, we cannot do that.

I should like to give my good wishes to this Committee which has done a great work of adding something to the memory of Swamiji in this place of pilgrimage which is so close to the hearts of all Indians. I don't think that a reminder was needed for Swami Vivekananda. But there are some who need this reminder and therefore they provided it and I hope it will be a source of strength to all those who come here.

For a complete civilization the world is waiting, waiting for the treasures to come out of India, waiting for the marvellous spiritual inheritance of the race, which through decades of degradation and misery, the nation has still clutched to her breast. The world is waiting for that treasure ; little do you know how much of hunger and of thirst there is outside of India for these wonderful treasures of our forefathers. We talk here, we quarrel with each other, we laugh at and ridicule everything holy. Little do we understand the heart-pangs of millions waiting outside the walls, stretching forth their hands for a little sip of that nectar which our forefathers have preserved in this land of India.

—Swami Vivekananda



ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

YAKSA AND YUDHISTHIRA

The Pāṇḍava brothers were in exile. Once Yudhiṣṭhira with his brothers entered a deep forest. As they were resting under a tree, they saw a brahmin approaching them in haste. He was obviously in a disturbed state of mind. He came to Yudhiṣṭhira and said: A wild deer took away my vessel containing fire-kindlers. Alas! How can I perform the fire-sacrifice? Kindly track the animal and bring the vessel to me. (In those days matches were unknown and fire was kindled by rubbing two wooden sticks together.)

The Pāṇḍavas, with their bows and arrows, quickly chased the animal. But the deer sped away by leaps and bounds and soon disappeared in the thick forest. Exhausted and disappointed at last, the Pāṇḍavas sat in the cool shade of a big tree. Their throats were parched with thirst. Yudhiṣṭhira then said to Nakula: Brother, please see if there is water available near by and fetch it. Your brothers are all tired and thirsty.

After a little search, Nakula saw a reservoir at a distance. He ran to that place and approaching it saw an expanse of crystal clear water. Naturally he wanted to slake his inordinate thirst. At that moment he heard a voice from the sky addressing him: Do not be rash, my dear. This reservoir is already in my possession. First answer my questions and then only can you drink the water and carry some away.

Not paying any heed to the voice Nakula drank the cool water and as a result dropped down dead.

Finding that Nakula did not return, Yudhiṣṭhira sent Sahadeva. He too saw the lake and approached it. To his great sorrow he found his brother dead by its side. He too was burning with thirst and first wanted to drink water. But before touching the water he heard the same voice speaking to him the same words. Disregarding the command of that voice, Sahadeva too quenched his thirst with the cool water and ceased to live.

Arjuna and then Bhīma went to the reservoir, one after the other, after a short interval. They were shocked to see their brothers dead. Thinking that some lurking foes must have killed them, they wanted to take revenge. But they too were dying of thirst. The desire to drink water was very strong. They descended to the lake and were about to drink the water, when the same aerial voice was heard. Enraged, they challenged the enemy to come before them and fight. But irresistible thirst made them drink the water and they too were dead.

Finding that it was quite a long time since the brothers had gone to fetch water and that none of them had returned, Yudhiṣṭhira himself approached the lake. He saw all his brothers dead on its bank. Deeply distressed he wept bitterly. But the terrible thirst dispersed his sorrowful thoughts for a moment and drew him to the water. He heard an ethereal voice: I am a Yakṣa (spirit) guarding this lake. Your brothers disobeyed me; so they are dead. This lake is already mine. If you also drink the water without answering my questions, the same fate will follow you. First answer my questions and then drink the water.

Yudhiṣṭhira: O Yakṣa, I do not desire what is in your possession. Ask me your questions. I shall answer them to the best of my knowledge.

Yakṣa: What makes a man proficient in learning? What makes him intelligent and saves him from danger? How does he attain the highest?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Association with the great in wisdom makes a man learned; service to elders makes him intelligent; courage saves a man in danger; and by austerity he attains the highest.

Yakṣa: What is nobler than the earth which sustains us? What is higher than the sky? What is faster than wind? What is in greater plenty than even the grass?

Yudhiṣṭhira: The mother who brings up her child with all care is a nobler sustainer than the earth; the father is higher than the sky; mind is speedier than the wind; and worries are more in abundance than even grass.

Yakṣa: What befriends a traveller? Who is a friend to one staying at home?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Learning is the friend of a traveller; a wife is a friend to him who stays at home.

Yakṣa: What is the sole means of Dharma, of fame, of happiness and of heaven?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Dexterity is the sole means of Dharma, charity of fame. Good conduct leads to happiness and by truth alone one attains heaven.

Yakṣa: What is the soul of man?

Yudhiṣṭhira: A son is the soul of man.

Yakṣa: What is the most precious of all riches? What is the highest gain and greatest happiness?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Sacred knowledge is the most precious of all riches. Health is the best of gains and contentment is the greatest of happiness.

Yakṣa: What is greater than Dharma in the world? Which Dharma is fruitful at all times? Controlling what does a man not grieve? Which friendship does not break?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Kindness is greater than Dharma. The eternal religion of the Vedas always abounds in fruits. Controlling the mind a man does not come to grief, and friendship with a holy person does not break.

Yakṣa: Giving up what endears a man to all? Abandoning what does a man not suffer? By getting rid of what does a man become rich and happy?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Giving up pride a man is loved by all. Abandoning anger man is not subject to suffering. A man without desire and avarice becomes rich and happy.

Yakṣa: What deludes people? What breaks a friendship?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Ignorance deludes people; greed separates friends.

Yakṣa: Which nation degenerates and becomes as if dead?

Yudhiṣṭhira: A nation without firm central administration degenerates and becomes dead.

Yakṣa: What are austerity, self-control, forbearance and shame?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Austerity is observance of

one's own Dharma; control of the mind is self-control; forbearance is to endure the pairs of opposites like happiness and misery; turning away from improper action is shame.

Yakṣa: What are knowledge, calmness, compassion and uprightness?

Yudhiṣṭhira: A direct perception of the Supreme Reality is knowledge; tranquillity of the mind is calmness; desire for happiness of all is compassion; and sameness of the mind is uprightness.

Yakṣa: Which enemy is difficult to vanquish? What is a perpetual disease? What distinguishes a good man from a bad one?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Anger is the enemy difficult to conquer; greed is the perpetual disease; a man engaged in the good of all is a good man; and the hard-hearted, unsympathetic, a bad man.

Yakṣa: What is said to be a holy bath, and what a noble gift in the world?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Cleaning oneself of mental impurities is a holy bath, and protection of beings is a noble gift in the world.

Yakṣa: Righteousness, acquisition of wealth and fulfilment of desire seem to be contradictory to one another. How can these be harmoniously practised by a householder?

Yudhiṣṭhira: When righteousness (Dharma) and one's wife are helpful to each other, then only can these be harmoniously practised.

Yakṣa: What makes one a real brahmin—birth, good conduct or learning?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Neither birth nor learning makes one a brahmin. Good conduct alone does. A person will not be a brahmin if he is a slave to bad habits notwithstanding his vast learning. Even though he may be well versed in the four Vedas, a man of bad conduct falls to a lower class.

Yakṣa: What is the greatest wonder in the world?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Every day living beings die in this world. Yet those that are left behind desire to live for ever! This verily is the greatest wonder.

Yakṣa: O king, you have answered my questions very well. Therefore let one of your brothers, whom you want, come to life.

Yudhiṣṭhira: Let Nakula be brought back to life.

Yakṣa: Why do you choose Nakula in preference to Bhīma or Arjuna, who possesses more strength and prowess for your protection?

Yudhiṣṭhira: Dharma is the only protection of man and not Bhīma or Arjuna. If Dharma is rejected, man will be ruined. My father had two wives, Kuntī and Mādrī. I, a son of Kuntī, am living, so she will not be completely bereaved. In order that there may be justice to Mādrī, I chose Nakula to be revived. I have the same reverence for both of them.

The Yakṣa, highly pleased with Yudhiṣṭhira's impartiality, granted him that all his brothers would come back to life.

—*Sañjaya*

Source: *The Mahābhārata, Araṇya Parvan,* Chapters 267-8.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

Greetings for the new year to our readers, writers and sympathizers!

In 1971 *Prabuddha Bharata* enters its seventy sixth year. And there is good news for our friends. Judging from the recent increase in its circulation it would appear that the message of the Journal is being more and more appreciated both in India and abroad. But this would not have been possible without the active interest of many friends in popularizing the Journal in their spheres of influence. We offer them our heartfelt thanks.

We also cordially invite all our friends to greater efforts in bringing the message of the *Prabuddha Bharata* to regions yet unexplored.

There is no gainsaying the fact that everywhere in the world man is confronted with powerful challenges in the face of which mettle is being sorely tried. What is essentially needed is the release of man's power from within to match the release of power from without. *To be* is as important as *to do*, if not more. We urgently need a perfect understanding of the fact that without self-control, compassion and charity we cannot make any system of thought and action work for the welfare and self-fulfilment of all. This calls for the qualitative resurgence of man by the side of materialistic progress.

In its own way *Prabuddha Bharata* has been singly dedicated to this end since its birth. As it advances in age it gathers more strength, confidence and determination to pursue this end, knowing full well how important it is to do so for mankind. Its efforts in this direction will go on without any accounting of success or failure. What is needed is enthusiastic and sustained participation in this endeavour.

IN THIS NUMBER

The questions and answers are from : 'M' : *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 4, 1957, References: questions 1, p. 118 ; 2, 185 ; 3, p. 196 ; 4, p. 334 ; 5, p. 92.

People are familiar with many interpretations of Swami Vivekananda's mission in life. A broad-spectrum prophet like him cannot, however, be interpreted or understood easily. Whatever may be the colour we choose to like, we must search and understand the white radiance behind the fascinating colour-band. The Editorial attempts to give readers a glimpse of that radiance. As Swamiji's birthday falls in this month, we do well to reflect on the significance of his life and message.

Professor William Hookens is the Head of English Department, Arts and Commerce College, Indore. He discusses in his article the question 'What's Wrong with Education ?', a question that is exercising the sane minds today the world over.

Dr. Laxman Prasad Mishra, M.A., Ph.D., Sahitya Ratna, Post-Graduate Department of Philosophy, Durga College, Raipur, analyses the 'Main Characteristics of Neo-Vedantic Movement' of the present Indian renaissance, a movement which 'not only fulfils the immediate need of the time but also has in it the capacity to fulfil the possible needs of infinite future.'

The personality of Socrates, the ugly-looking but golden-hearted Greek philosopher, never grows stale. Because he did not allow them intellectual insouciance,

the Athenians called him the 'gad-fly'. In his devotion to duty, law, honesty, and truth, he towered above them all. His placidity in facing the cup of hemlock is a heirloom of humanity. The 'Explorer' brings to the readers a profile of this wise hero.

Swami Vivekananda 'was keenly aware of the forces at work in the modern world. ...And it was remarkable how Swamiji could, even at that time, visualize the present-day problems and could know fully well, then, the trends at work in modern times,' observed Smt. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, at a function organized by the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee in honour of her visit to the Memorial at Kanyakumari on 16 September 1970. Striking a personal note, she spoke feelingly how the words of Swamiji inspired the whole of her family. The summary of her speech is entitled 'Relevance of Vivekananda's Approach to the Present-day Problems.' The function was presided over by Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna Order. 'The Message of Kanyākumāri' is adapted from his presidential address.

In Illuminating Dialogues from Indian Lore, 'Sañjaya' relates the famous conversation between Yakṣa and Yudhiṣṭhira from *Mahābhārata* embodying distilled wisdom of man.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

COLLECTED WORKS OF SRI K. A. KRISHNASWAMI IYER, ED. BY SWAMI SATCHIDANANDA SARASWATI, Published by Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, Holenarsipur (Mysore), 1969, Pages 320, Price Rs. 6.00.

While most of the students of Advaita today seem to think only in terms of Sankara's writings, there was a healthier time in the past when students and scholars alike did not like to ignore Gaudapada. The late Krishnaswamy Iyer in his *Vedanta or the Science of Reality* gave a brilliant exposition of Gaudapada and related it to the central doctrine of Sankara. And we assume that anything from the pen of the same author is bound to be equally good. The present work amply justifies our conviction. Here are four philosophical and spiritual poems of great merit, in addition to eight very good essays. There are meditations, and a brief note on 'Tiger' Varadachar. The eight essays deal with the Fundamentals of Vedanta, Vedic basis of Advaita, critiques of the systems of Ramanuja and Madhva, examination of Sankhya System, the relation of the *Gita* to the Sankhya thought, and the philosophy of Advaita. There is a brilliant paper refuting the charge that Sankara was a Buddhist in disguise. This paper was originally published in 1932. If only the late Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya was aware of this paper and of the other book of the present author, we would have had a different edition of the Mandukya Karika. This collection of essays and poems is a must for every student of Philosophy.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

THE INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL ANNUAL, ED. BY DR. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN, Volume II, 1968, pp. 342, Volume III, 1969, pp. 251, Price Rs. 10/- each, both published by The Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, Madras 5.

These volumes contain the papers read by eminent scholars, both Indian and foreign, at the Seminar organized by the 'Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy' attached to the university of Madras. Each volume is divided into three parts. Part I of Volume II contains the papers bearing on Indian Philosophy and Social Concern'. There are twenty contributions under this head. All of them show deep appreciation of Indian speculative thought. Some, however, betray inadequate knowledge, but even they are well argued. The general aim of these papers is to show that there

is no substance in the usual charge that owing to the excessive importance attached to man's welfare in the other world, Indian thinkers have neglected this world and that owing to the excessive pre-occupation with one's own salvation, the average Indian is callous to the sufferings of his fellowmen. Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan, the moving spirit behind the Seminar, effectively counters these charges in his initial address. Part II of this volume is devoted to a discussion of 'the Concept of Maya' which, as all know, is the corner-stone in the edifice of Advaita Vedanta. Critics of this system have naturally spent all their powder and shot in demolishing it. Down the centuries there have been persistent attempts on the part of theistic thinkers to show the untenability of the concept but it has stood its ground remarkably well and has even grown stronger on that account. Recent developments in the realm of Physics have furnished fresh support to it. There are more than twenty contributions on this important topic and that is as it should be. Some of them are, however, critical of the concept but they have been effectively offset by other papers. On the whole, the reader gets a comprehensive account of the concept. In Part III there are six special articles under the caption 'My Approach to Indian Philosophy'. Dr. Mahadevan's paper on 'Vedanta and Buddhism' gives a lucid summing up of Sri Sankara's criticism of the four schools of Buddhism.

Volume III contains the papers read at the two half-yearly Seminars in 1967. It also falls into three parts. There are sixteen papers bearing on 'The Concept of Progress' in Part I. All of them are agreed in thinking that real progress is in the realm of spirituality and not in the realm of matter. Scientific discoveries and the creature comforts which they have brought in their wake have only an instrumental and no intrinsic value. If this fact is not kept in view, we are likely to get lost in them and lose our soul. Sri Sankara has drawn pointed attention to this fact in a minor poem of his known as *'Anatma-Sri-Vigarhana-Prakaranam'*. *Part II* consists of twenty-two papers devoted to an examination of 'The Meaning of Metaphysics'. Several writers have exposed the hollowness of the criticism levelled by the Logical Positivists against metaphysics. Speaking from the standpoint of Advaita Vedanta, Dr. Mahadevan has said that 'the main task of Metaphysics is reflection (Manana) though its presupposition and aim is beyond the reflective level. The source of metaphysics is scripture which represents the direct experience of sages. Metaphysics is therefore the inquiry into the nature of the Real'. Part III contains a paper on 'Philosophical Trends' read by Dr. Mahadevan at a Symposium held in Delhi. It gives a running account of all six schools of Indian Philosophy.

The two volumes, as a whole, do much credit to the 'Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy'. Students interested in Indian Philosophy in general and Advaita Vedanta in particular will profit immensely by reading them.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF ST. LOUIS, U.S.A.

REPORT FOR 1969-70

Weekly Services

On Sunday mornings and Tuesday evenings, Swami Satprakashananda, who is in charge, conducted regular services in the Society's chapel. On Sundays he spoke on different religious and philosophical subjects. On Tuesdays he conducted a meditation and expounded the Bhagavad-gita. On special occasions devotional songs and other interesting features were added to the lectures and the discourses. The meetings were open to all. Other than the members and friends of the Society many came from different religious and educational centres, such as Lindenwood College, St. Charles, Mo., The Central Church of Christ, Mark Twain High School, The Divinity School of St. Louis University, Temple Emanuel, Conway Road, St. Louis County, De Andries High School, St. John's United Church, St. Charles, Mo., First Presbyterian Church, First Congregational Church, John Burroughs High School, Villa Duchesne High School, Washington University, and St. Louis University. The students were usually accompanied by their teachers. They generally met the Swami after the services and asked questions, which he answered. Out-of-town friends and devotees also attended the meetings.

The Swami's lectures and discourses and the meditations conducted by him were tape recorded. The tape recordings were used at all the meetings of the Society during the summer recess. The Vedanta Society of Kansas City used them regularly at their weekly and fortnightly meetings. Individual Vedanta students in-town and out-of-town used them very often.

Printed and mimeographed folders, sheets, and pamphlets dwelling on different aspects of Vedanta were kept in the reception hall for free distribution.

Besides the regular services there was silent meditation in the Society's chapel every weekday from 11 to 12 noon.

During the summer recess extending over seven weeks the members and friends of the Society met regularly every Sunday morning and Tuesday evening at the usual time. They listened to the Swami's tape recorded lectures and discourses.

The Class on the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

The Swami expounded the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna on the first Thursday of every month excepting the summer recess. He also related pertinent incidents from his personal knowledge of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and answered questions.

Anniversaries

The birthdays of Sri Krishna, The Buddha, Shankara, Sri Ramakrishna, The Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda, Swami Premananda, and Swami Shivananda were observed with devotional worship in the shrine and a special service in the chapel. Other festivals, such as Good Friday, the worship of the Divine Mother Durga and Kali and Christmas Eve were also duly observed. On Good Friday and Christmas Eve the Swami conducted a special service. A Hindu dinner was served on Sri Ramakrishna's birthday. On all other occasions fruits and sweets were served.

Additional Meetings

The Swami was invited to speak at De Andries High School on the special features of Hinduism. A special meeting was held in the Society's chapel for some members of the Kirkwood Methodist Church. After the tape recorded lecture the Swami met the audience and answered their questions.

The Swami's Trip to Chicago

On Saturday, July 26, the Swami laid the foundation stone of the temple in the Vivekananda Monastery and Retreat grounds in Ganges Township, Michigan, under the auspices of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago in the presence of Swamis Bhashyananda, Ranganathananda, Shraddhananda and many followers and admirers of Vedanta, who gathered from various places, such as Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and Washington, D.C.

Swami's Visit to Kansas City

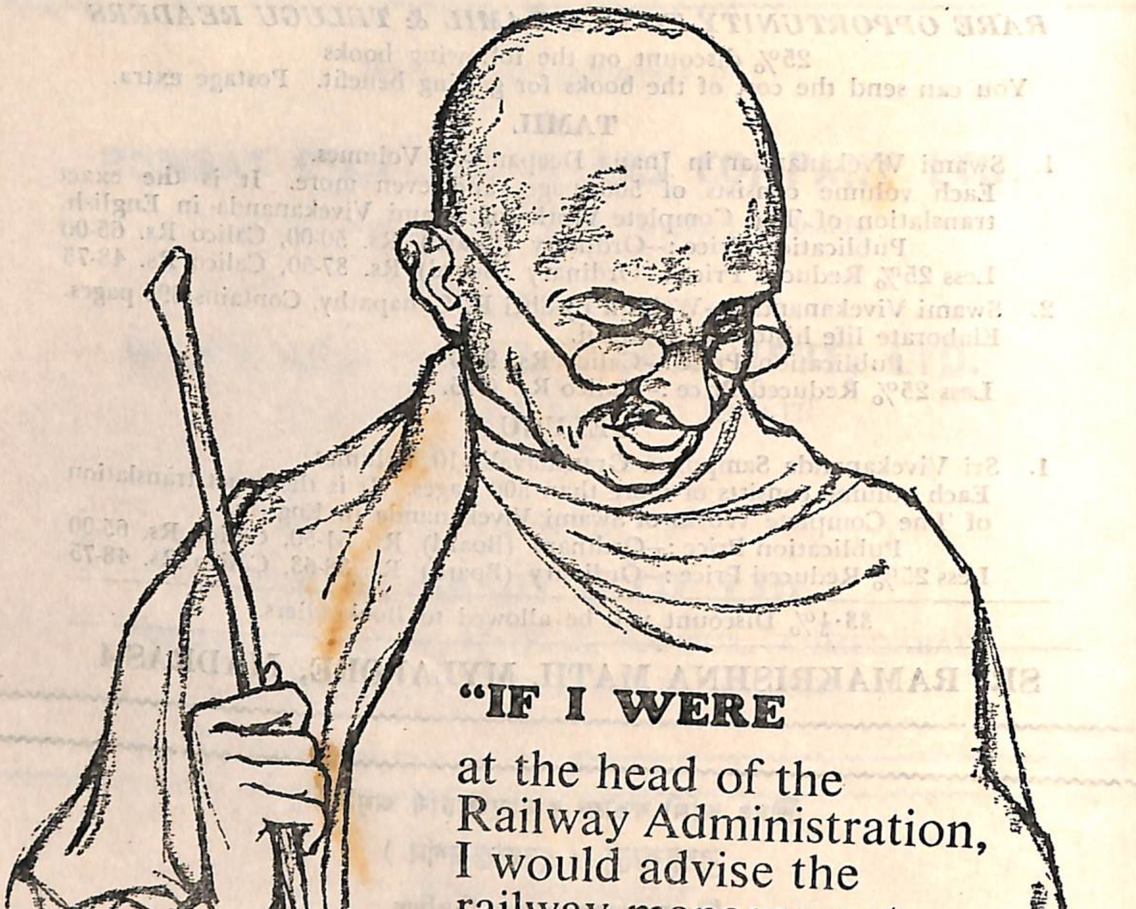
The Swami visited Kansas City in November for a couple of days. The first evening he addressed a public meeting in Conover auditorium of the Unitarian Church under the auspices of the Vedanta Society of Kansas City. His topic was "The Secure Foundation of Human Life." He also answered a number of written questions. On the following day the Swami and the Vedanta students and friends were entertained with a dinner in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bergfeldt, where the Vedanta Society of Kansas City is located. After the dinner the Swami addressed a meeting and answered questions. He gave ten interviews in Kansas City.

Interviews and Other Activities

In St. Louis the Swami gave 180 interviews to earnest seekers of spiritual instruction and others who came for the solution of their personal problems.

The Society had the privilege of receiving many guests and visitors from all parts of the U. S. and India. Most of them attended the services and had interviews with the Swami.

The Society's library was well utilized by its members, friends and admirers.


"IF I WERE
at the head of the
Railway Administration,
I would advise the
railway management
to tell the public that
unless they purchased
tickets, trains would
be stopped and they
would resume journey
only if the passengers
willingly paid the
fares due." — Mahatma Gandhi
INDIAN RAILWAYS
EASTERN RAILWAY

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